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CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

Page 13, line 10, *for Dr. read Mr.*

„ 43, note, *for Tyndal read Tyndall.*

„ 49, note, *for Tyndal read Tyndall.*

„ 53, line 5, *for teach read teaches.*

„ 56, line 4 from foot, *for Num. xii. 17 read Ex. xxiv. 1, 2.*

„ 111, line 4, *for Gen. ii. read Gen. i.*

„ 124, line 6, *for 8 read 9.*

„ 155, add note to line 5 from foot, *Ewald, p. 479.*

„ 157, add note to line 6, *Ewald, p. 470.*

„ 157, add note to line 5 from foot, *Ewald, p. 471.*

„ 158, add note to line 4, *Ewald, p. 470.*

„ 159, add note to line 4, *Ewald, p. 473.*

„ 159, add note to line 5 from foot, *Ewald, p. 451.*

„ 177, line 8, *for the period put a semicolon.*

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Lectures were preached at intervals varying from one to eight months, and extending altogether over four years. It was therefore difficult to preserve a general continuity of argument, and at the same time choose for each separate discourse a subject that would engage the attention and interest of a changing audience.

My endeavours to combine these two objects will be apparent to the reader in an occasional repetition of the argument of a preceding lecture at the beginning of the next. The lectures being printed as they were preached, these temporary links have been allowed to remain; they do not, however, render it unnecessary to add a few remarks on the general subject.

I have not desired to advocate any particular theory concerning the extent or mode of prophetic inspiration; but simply to establish its reality in harmony with the facts of history, and the laws of man's nature.

My aim, therefore, as explained in the first lecture, has been to draw out some of the internal and moral evidences of a Divine Revelation, by comparing the

personal character, times, and circumstances of the prophets with the nature of the special truths revealed to them.

But Revelation, and especially Prophetic Revelation, implies not only Divine foreknowledge, but a direct communication of it to the mind of the prophet, and a paramount control of the course of human affairs by God's providence.

And here it is evident that we are brought at once into direct collision with some of the strongest tendencies of modern thought. It would be folly for the Christian advocate to shut his eyes to the prevalence, in philosophy and science, of ideas which seem to be directly opposed not only to the actual existence, but even to the possibility, of such Divine interposition in the world of nature and of man, as is implied in miracle or prophecy. The question of antecedent probability cannot be passed over; we cannot begin, as Bishop Hurd—the friend and biographer of Warburton, and first lecturer on his Foundation—begins his course of lectures, by assuming that ‘every just reasoner’ will proceed on the supposition of ‘the Divine original and direction of the prophecies.’ We must clear the way for that supposition by showing, as I have tried to do in my second lecture, that prophecy considered as a species of miracle is not *à priori* incredible.

The antecedent objections to its credibility are presented chiefly under two forms: 1st, It is asserted, as by the late Professor Baden Powell in *Essays and Reviews*, that no testimony can reach to the proof of a supernatural cause of any event however strange; and 2d, It is said that miracles are impossible, because opposed to natural laws which allow of no exception.

In answer to the first objection, I have tried to show, by an analysis of such a miracle as the raising of Lazarus, that an eye-witness of the whole transaction might have had satisfactory proof that the effect was due to a supernatural cause. The reader will observe that I am only meeting an *à priori* objection, and do not attempt to prove more than this, that a miracle is not a thing essentially incapable of proof, but a thing to be judged according to the evidence available in each case.

In meeting the second objection, which involves the relation of a miracle to the immutability of natural laws, I have referred to statements of Professor Huxley and Dr. Tyndall, as containing important and interesting admissions, which ought to be welcomed and acknowledged by all who deprecate a rude divorce between science and religion.

I trust that I have not misunderstood the meaning of those eminent physicists, nor made unfair use of their expressions concerning the limits of scientific knowledge, and the reality of a world of thought and spirit beyond those limits.¹

The way being thus opened to a fair consideration of the evidence in favour of Divine Revelation, I have entered in the third lecture upon my more immediate subject.

In a rapid sketch of the rise and progress of Hebrew prophecy, I have shown how closely and essentially

¹ Since these lectures were in print, I have seen the anonymous work entitled *Supernatural Religion*, published this year. The antecedent objections to miracles are there elaborately developed and urged with great ability. It would be presumptuous to attempt a criticism of the writer's arguments within the narrow limits of a preface.

it was intertwined with the national life from the earliest ages, and how great an influence it exercised upon the actual conduct of public affairs, especially in the master minds of the nation at every great crisis of its destiny.

These phenomena are unique in history, and cannot be explained without acknowledging the existence of a strong and practical conviction among the people of Israel, that it was God Himself who spoke to them by His prophets.

In the fourth lecture, the true idea of prophecy is contrasted with the unconscious prediction of Caiaphas, and defined to be the fruit of a living union between the Divine Spirit and the spirit of man;¹ it thus includes the personal fitness of the prophet, and his free response to the impulse of God's Spirit, in addition to that purely supernatural and hidden power of a controlling Providence, without which Revelation and Prophecy would be alike impossible.

In the fifth and sixth lectures, I have argued that prophecy, so far as it depends on a preparation of the heart in man, is a natural outgrowth of germs already laid in the primitive religion of the patriarchs, and preserved in the first pages of Genesis,—the ideas of God, of man, and of their mutual relation therein contained being precisely such as are needed to prepare both the prophet and the people to receive a further revelation from God.

In the remaining lectures, I have followed the growing light of Messianic prophecy, from its early dawn in the blessing of Abraham, to the noonday brightness of Isaiah's glowing pages. Throughout, I have had in view the leading principle, that pro-

¹ See p. 91.

phcey and the personal history of the prophet can only be understood in the light of their mutual connection.

The truth of this principle is not less strikingly displayed in the examples of Abraham and Moses than in those of David and Isaiah.

Thus the moral difficulties involved in the Divine command to offer up Isaac as a burnt-offering, receive an adequate solution only when the triumph of faith over the agony of love is seen to be a fit and necessary preparation of the father's heart to behold in his son the type of a greater sacrifice, and so to see far off the day of Christ.¹

In the same manner, a right appreciation of the character of Moses as a mediator and intercessor, throws new light upon his prediction of Christ as a Prophet like unto himself.² The thought is implied, though very briefly expressed, in the words of Dr. Payne Smith: 'In the comparison between our Lord and Moses, it seems to me that our Lord is the Prophet like unto Moses, more in being the true Mediator between God and man, than even in being the Giver of a new dispensation.'³ Agreeing fully, as I do, with this remark, I yet think that the comparison may be extended with advantage to the two dispensations, when that of Moses is seen to be based upon the fact of a great redemption of God's people, and to have for its aim the consecration of all Israel as a kingdom of priests.⁴

In this portion of my subject, I have derived much

¹ Lect. VII. Compare on this subject Dr. Hessey's *Boyle Lectures*, 1st Series, Lect. IV.

² Lect. VIII.

³ Pref. to *Bampton Lectures*, p. 9.

⁴ Lect. IX.

advantage from the profound learning and keen historic insight of Ewald.

His picture of Moses, and of the grandeur of his age, is a masterpiece of true genius, but marred by one fatal flaw. Every element of human greatness is magnified to the utmost, but the Divine presence is withdrawn, and the loss can neither be concealed nor compensated. The conduct of Moses becomes unintelligible, and his work impossible, if the power of God is not acknowledged in his words and deeds.¹

In the tenth and eleventh lectures, I have briefly traced the two chief lines of prophetic thought that run throughout the Psalms, the one foreshowing the Lord's Anointed King, and the other the Servant of God persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Here, too, one cannot help regarding Ewald's work with mingled feelings of admiration and regret. His chapters on the rise of the monarchy, and 'the sunny days of David's rule,' show so firm and large a grasp of the political principles and forces involved in the great constitutional change, combined with such a vivid perception of the grandeur of the age, and of 'the glorious originality of creative spiritual power' in the royal prophet, that one feels almost guilty of ingratitude and presumption in venturing to speak of error or defect. But Ewald's 'Titanic efforts' (to use his own phrase) reveal by their partial failure the hopeless impossibility of the task he undertook in trying to interpret the history of Israel, without a full and unreserved acknowledgment of the direct and supernatural agency of the Spirit of God.

Thus he attributes to the prophetic power 'an

¹ This argument is ably developed by Dr. Graves in his *Lectures on the Pentateuch*, Part i. lect. 5.

inherent violence,' and to 'the newly-aspiring class of prophets' ambitious aims, which are quite inconsistent with an inspiration really Divine.

Again, instead of regarding the human monarchy as strictly subordinate to the theocracy, and the king as God's viceroy, Ewald treats it as a distinct and co-ordinate institution 'added to the theocracy, to fulfil the wants of the age by its side' (Vol. iii. p. 4, English Translation). He represents the prophets alone, and not the kings, as 'the living instruments through which the theocracy acted.'

Thus the monarchy, though invested with the inviolable sanctity and majesty of the Lord's Anointed, is still presented as an essentially human power opposed to the quasi-Divine power of the prophets; 'command confronts command; and though sometimes these two distinct powers may easily understand each other, and remain in peace side by side, at others they may chafe violently against each other' (p. 6).

I have tried to show that the monarchy was from the first designed to be a new instrument of the theocracy, or even its visible embodiment, and that the prophets were the duly accredited messengers who brought the commands of the heavenly King to His viceroy upon earth.

The new institution thus derived all its power and sanctity from the ancient faith; the human monarch became the type of the true Messiah; and what Ewald calls 'the infinite ideal of the theocracy,' was embodied in the everlasting kingdom of the promised seed of David.

In this part of my subject I have derived great advantage from the Commentary of Professor Delitzsch on the Psalms, and still greater from the admirable

from the great prophecy of Christ's vicarious sufferings in Isaiah liii. Here especially I have been deeply indebted to Dr. Payne Smith, whose interpretation of Isaiah xl.-lxvi., and vindication of the unity of authorship, are among the most valuable additions that have been made in the present age to Biblical Theology. It is very refreshing to turn from the vague and contradictory speculations of the negative criticism to the clear strong reasoning of the learned Dean.

In conclusion, I must express my frequent obligations to Dr. Fr. Düsterdieck, whose interesting and scholarlike essay on 'The Moral Nature of Prophecy' first suggested the subject of these lectures.

I have also to thank my learned friend and colleague, Dr. J. A. Hessey, for the aid of his kindly and careful criticism in revising these pages as they passed through the press.

WALGRAVE RECTORY,
16th October 1874.

LECTURE I.

PREACHED ON ADVENT SUNDAY 1870.



The Nature of Prophecy.

I.

The Nature of Prophecy.

‘For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ;
but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the
Holy Ghost.’—2 PET. i. 21.

THE purpose of the lecture founded by Bishop Warburton, as stated by himself, is ‘to prove the truth of revealed religion in general, and of the Christian in particular, from the completion of the prophecies in the Old and New Testament, which relate to the Christian Church, especially to the apostasy of papal Rome.’

This design appears to include the whole range of prophecy from Genesis to Revelation, so far as it looks onward to, and prepares the way for, the Christian Church, and has already found its fulfilment therein.

An ample choice of material is thus set

before us; nor is our use of it confined within narrow limits. The completion of prophecy is to be treated as an evidence of the truth not only of Christianity itself, but of all that is included under the general name of Revealed Religion. Thus the faith of the patriarchs, the hope of Israel, the desire of the nations, and the creed of Christendom—these, so far as they have been roused and sustained by prophecy, and justified by its fulfilment, all fall within our view.

The Founder's idea of the nature of prophecy is made clear, when he speaks of its 'completion;' he evidently meant what the English use of the word 'prophecy' most commonly means, the foretelling of 'things for to come.'

Prophecy being thus understood, the evidence which it bears to the truth of revealed religion is of the simplest and most direct kind.

The supposed prediction, the event alleged as its fulfilment, and their relation to each other, must be tested by certain rules about which there is little room for disagreement.

The prediction must be such as cannot work out its own fulfilment; it must be known

and published before the event; and it must be *designed* as a prediction.

The event must be such as could not possibly have been foreseen by human sagacity. The agreement between the prediction and the event must be, not ambiguous, not accidental, but definite and designed.

Where these conditions are satisfied, the completion of prophecy is a clear proof of that foreknowledge which is an attribute of God, and can be imparted to man only by *His* inspiration.

In many important prophecies of the Old Testament we see at once that *most* of the conditions stated above are fully satisfied; but that is not enough. The test is incomplete, and the prophecy lacks full cogency as an evidence of divine revelation, until it is shown to satisfy *all* the conditions of a genuine prediction.

Take, for example, any of the passages which seem to foretell the calling of the Gentiles, the dispersion of the Jews, or the spread of a new and spiritual religion from Jerusalem throughout the world.

The *events* in these cases cannot be disputed, for they lie yet as facts before our eyes; nor can there be a shadow of doubt that the alleged *predictions* were published centuries before the events began to be fulfilled: the only questions, therefore, that can possibly be raised, must have reference to the nature and design of the prophetic utterances. Were they intended as express predictions of these particular events? Were such predictions manifestly beyond the reach of human foresight? Or, can they be fairly explained from natural causes, without recourse to the aid of supernatural influence?

It is on questions such as these that the modern estimate of prophecy chiefly depends; and it is evident that they demand not only an exact interpretation of the text and context of any alleged prediction, but also a full consideration of the personal character of the prophet,—of the probable effect on his mind of the national history, with its sore judgments and its great deliverances,—of the Law and the Covenants and the promises,—of the teaching of prophets earlier than himself,—

of the tendency of the age in which he lived, the influences by which he was surrounded, the events of which he was a witness,—and above all, they demand a candid and unprejudiced acceptance of any indications or direct assertions which the prophet himself makes concerning the source, authority, and design of his own utterances.

I need hardly say that upon such matters as these, so important and so complex, there has been an almost endless variety of speculation: it will help to clear our view, if we look first at two extreme forms of opinion which stand out in the strongest opposition.

There are, on the one hand, critics who, denying all superhuman inspiration, endeavour to show that there is nothing in the writings of the prophets which may not be ascribed to the force of natural genius and the tendency of the Hebrew mind,—to the influence of a pure religion and a holy law,—to the far-reaching foresight of a mind imbued with the great ideas of the past history of Israel, keenly watchful over its present welfare, kindling with patriotic hopes of its future glory.

This form of opinion, confidently asserted and ably advocated in our own and other countries, so evidently stands in direct opposition to the whole design of these lectures, so cuts at the root of that idea of prophecy on which they are founded, that its claims must of necessity be examined before we can pass on freely to the consideration of any particular predictions.

I am not without hope of showing in my next discourse that the basis of this purely naturalistic view of prophecy is an unproved assumption, and that in fact it starts by begging the principle of the whole question at issue; but at present I pass on with the remark, that the ready acceptance which such a theory has found in some quarters, is perhaps less due to its intrinsic claims than to a violent reaction against the opposite extreme.

For it must be admitted that on the other hand the scriptural definition of prophecy, that 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' has too often been interpreted in so narrow and unworthy a sense, as to make the inspired prophet nothing

better than a passive instrument in the hand of God,—a *human voice*, to which the breathing thoughts and even the burning words are supplied, not through the conscious and willing action of the sanctified, enlightened, and enraptured mind, but by the minute control and immediate dictation of the Holy Spirit of God. Surely it is, as I have ventured to say, a narrow and unworthy thought, that the honour of that Divine Spirit, or the authority of His holy word, can be exalted by such disparagement of one of the highest gifts and one of the noblest offices that He has ever bestowed on man.

Why should we be afraid to recognise in the prophets of Israel all that can possibly be ascribed to the influences of race and genius, of moral and religious culture, of historical associations and political sagacity? We know only too well, and feel too keenly, in such days as these, how little all these natural or acquired gifts can do to reveal the future, even in its broadest outlines, or to modify the sudden surprise with which the great catastrophes of the world's history fall upon us. Where is

the prophet who can tell us now¹ what a day will bring forth?

If, then, we see a series of men raised up in Israel, who not only interpret the great drama of human life, as its action is unfolded before their eyes from scene to scene, but pierce with clear sight the dark curtain that still hangs before the future, we may be well assured that the excellency of this power is of God, and not of man. In the strength of that assurance, we may fearlessly go on to examine every fact and every argument that may be thought to throw light upon the mode in which the Spirit of God breathes His mysterious power into the prophet's soul, and touches his lips with hallowed fire.

So long as the argument is based upon sound reason, upon facts of experience, and upon the witness of Holy Scripture, the believer in a divine revelation has no pretext for refusing the appeal, and ought to have no wish to avoid it.

If strong in faith, he cannot but be fearless

¹ Nov. 1870, during the siege of Paris by the Germans.

for himself of the issues of inquiry; and for others, it is not *truth* he fears, but the false lights which may be mistaken for it, only so long as they are not closely examined.

We have, indeed, good reason to be thankful to any who will teach us to understand and appreciate more thoroughly the real facts of the Bible; and we gladly acknowledge that much may be learnt even from erroneous systems, such as those of the rationalizing interpreter and his extreme opponent. For in both of them the chief part of that which is *positive* is true; it is in what each *denies* that he most offends against the truth.

And here, in the case of prophecy, while the one excludes or disparages the agency of some of God's best gifts to man,—his spiritual faculties,—the other does worse; for, by his denial of the possibility of supernatural foreknowledge, he shuts out God Himself from all present influence over the world that He has made, and the beings whom He has placed in it.

My purpose, therefore, in these lectures is, to consider prophecy in its historical and moral aspects, especially in its relation to the

mind of the prophet himself, to his reason, his conscience, his religious training, his life and experience as a member of the holy nation and peculiar people of God.

Our inquiry will thus proceed upon recorded facts. We shall try to study the prophetic inspiration as seen in its effects upon the man, remembering always that its essential cause lies hidden from our view in the infinite mystery of the Divine nature.

And although I do not know whether this same line of argument has been taken by any of my predecessors here, I am encouraged to enter upon it by observing how they have understood the Founder's purpose. His friend and biographer, Bishop Hurd, in the first series of lectures, did not feel himself limited to the interpretation of special predictions; but devoted several discourses to refuting false ideas of the nature of prophecy, to defining its true idea, and to developing from that true idea the general nature of the argument in proof of a divine revelation.

Among more recent lectures also, those seem to have created the most general interest,

and retained the most lasting influence, which have treated of the general nature and structure of prophecy, and of its use and design in reference to the times when it was given, and to the great purpose of salvation which runs through it from age to age.

The nature of the evidence which may be derived from such inquiries into the inner nature of prophecy, cannot be better stated than in the words of one of Dr. Davison's admirable discourses: 'Indications of design, of fitness, and wisdom, as well as of internal truth, will coalesce with the evidence of predictions fulfilled. Both will support the conclusion sought to be established, namely, the *inspiration* of prophecy; or, in the words of Scripture, that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."'

In like manner, we may hope that in a reverent study of the *inner*, and if I may so call it, the *moral* nature of prophecy, as seen both in the truths revealed and in their harmonious adaptation to the mental faculties,

the moral sense, and the spiritual discernment of the prophet and his hearers, we may find some confirmation of our faith in the inspired word of God, — some true reconciliation of those divine and human elements which, when separately and exclusively regarded, diverge into opposite errors, but when combined in a living unity, make up the true idea of prophetic inspiration.

That there is such a '*living unity*,' whether we can succeed in describing it or not, I fully believe; for it is not a mere fanciful analogy that is often traced between the *written* word of God and that Eternal Word which was made flesh, and dwelt as man among men. So real and striking is the correspondence, that many have doubted to which they should apply the well-known description in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of 'the word of God which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.' If, as the best interpreters agree, the spoken or written word, and not the Incarnate Word, is there meant, why is it described in language that might seem to apply to some personal Being full

of life and energy? It is because there is a vital union of the divine and human elements in Holy Scripture, answering to the union of the two natures in the one Christ.

And as it is essential to a right faith in the Incarnation to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is not only perfect God, but perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; even so we believe that the inspired word embraces and unites in full reality the human and the divine, the thoughts of man and the mind of the Spirit, the facts of the world that now is, and the powers of the world to come.

Nor is this analogy accidental. The written word is wholly subordinate in its design, and therefore truly adapted in its nature, to the Incarnate Word; 'for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

Would any say that we disparage the majesty of Christ's deity because we maintain the full reality of His manhood?

Why, then, should it be thought a disparagement to the inspired word to maintain that it also is as truly human as it is divine?

And if it be so, does it not follow that from this *human* side we may hope most easily to penetrate to its inner nature?

It is for us, and for our learning, that divine wisdom speaks by man's lips, and in human language: for *us*, that we may understand with *human* faculties.

'Divine truth, therefore,' it has been well said, 'hath its humiliation as well as its exaltation.'¹ It condescends, when it comes into the world, to be born in man's thoughts and clothed in man's language, even as the Eternal Son was content to veil His glory in the infirmities of human flesh.

And why should we fear to recognise this gracious condescension in Holy Scripture? Why doubt that the Holy Spirit makes full use of the natural faculties of man, weak and imperfect as they are without His aid? To doubt this is in reality to disparage the wisdom and goodness of God.

For if God condescends to reveal His truth through the ministry of man, is it not *most* consonant to His godly wisdom to call into

¹ John Smith, *Select Discourses*.

exercise the highest faculties of that nature which is His own creation ?

I do not mean to imply that the prophet may not sometimes be used for a subordinate purpose,—as a passive and even unconscious instrument in the hand of God. He may be made a type of one greater than himself, as Moses and David were ; he may be a sign and a wonder, as Isaiah and his children ; he may be driven to prophesy against his will, as Balaam or as Jonah ;—but these are not the distinctive functions of the true prophet ; they belong not to the excellence of his gift, or the dignity of his calling.

The prophet is essentially one who receives, and, though we know not how, is *conscious* of receiving, direct revelations from God, and a commission to publish them to his fellow-men.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon him, and he knows it. The very fact that he speaks not in his own name, but in the name of Jehovah, shows that he is conscious of the power that worketh in him ; that his spirit feels the presence of the Father of spirits.

Or can we believe that, in the highest revelations of Himself to the one creature whom He has made in His own image, God makes no use of those moral and spiritual powers in which man's likeness to his Maker lies?

To suppose, as some do, that the Holy Spirit uses man only as a passive recipient of His power, a mere machine,—that He makes the sacred historian His penman, the inspired prophet His mouthpiece,—is, in fact, to suppose, what it is difficult to express with reverence, that the all-wise Creator knows not how to make the best use of the nature which He has Himself endowed with so many excellent gifts.

Moreover, this jealous limitation of the idea of prophecy does not strengthen its evidence of a supernatural revelation. It adds, and can add, nothing to the proof of divine foreknowledge derived from the fulfilment of prediction; while, on the other hand, we must remember that this proof, clear and cogent as it is, serves rather to satisfy doubt, or to silence disbelief, than to enlighten and instruct the believer. Its logical force is

greater than its moral persuasiveness ; it compels the submission of the understanding more readily than it wins the assent of the heart.

And why ? Because the evidence is drawn, not from the inner nature of the truth revealed, but only from its correspondence with the event. It shows us but one element of prophecy, the divine foreknowledge, and this in its barest form,—as a sign and a miracle, rather than as a revelation of moral and spiritual truth.

If this were the *only* use of prophecy, it would be less edifying in itself, less in harmony than it is with the other evidences of religion ; for *they* are adapted not less to our moral nature than to our intellectual faculties.

The beauty and holiness of Christ's personal character and life on earth ; the acknowledged purity and perfection of His moral teaching ; His fearless yet gentle advocacy of all that our hearts confess as holy, just, and true ; His patient and willing resignation to a life of suffering, and (to say the least) to a martyr's death ; the steadfast adherence of His first

followers to a name despised and rejected of men; their unwavering, undaunted testimony to the great facts of His Resurrection and Ascension, on which their faith and ours is founded; their firm reliance on His divine power and promised Spirit; their willingness to suffer after His example, and for His and the gospel's sake; and finally, the truth, the holiness, the love, which live and breathe in their writings as in His recorded words;—all these are evidences of divine truth, which move our affections and win our hearts, not less than they satisfy our reason and convince our judgment.

And what shall we say of the gospel miracles, which I have reserved for a last word, because their evidence of supernatural power is most akin to that of prophecy?

Is there then no moral, no human element in them? Does it add nothing to their influence on our belief, that they were marvels of mercy as well as marvels of power?—that we see in them the arm of the Lord never once outstretched to take vengeance upon the wickedness of an enemy, but only

to help the infirmities, to relieve the sufferings, to soften the sorrows, and (at least in one instance, and that the first of all) to brighten the joys of this mortal life?

Yes; all this is felt and acknowledged, both by those who believe and by those who deny the supernatural character of the works of Christ.

And when we deplore the rash assaults which have been made upon the reality of the gospel miracles, it is not because the assailants exalt too highly their moral beauty, and the spiritual truths which they symbolize and embody, but because the view taken of this subjective evidence is too exclusive and contracted; it is because men will not trace back mercy and goodness and truth to their divine original, nor behold that light of the glory of God which, to eyes that can see, illumines and shines through the perfect humanity of Jesus our Lord.

If, in like manner, we deprecate the tone in which modern critics too often speak of prophecy, it is not because they assert the power and vindicate the claims of its human ele-

ments; but because, on the contrary, they narrow the sphere of man's faculties, and destroy the true dignity of prophecy, when they shut the prophet out from direct and real communication with his God.

LECTURE II.

PREACHED ON SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY,
5TH FEBRUARY 1871.



Antecedent Objections to the Possibility of
Supernatural Influence.

II.

Antecedent Objections to the Possibility of Supernatural Influence.

‘The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.’—ECCLES. i. 9.

ON opening any of the prophetic books, the first fact which meets us on almost every page is, that the prophet claims a supernatural gift,—a wisdom that is not of himself, but of God.

Whatever be the subject of his communication,—to Israel or to the nations,—the form in which he delivers it is that of a message direct from Jehovah: ‘Thus saith the Lord;’ ‘The word of the Lord came unto me;’ ‘These be the last words of David: The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.’

More particularly, the prophets claim for Jehovah, and for themselves His servants, the power of foretelling future events; and this power they make the decisive test between the true prophet and the false, between the God of Israel and the gods of the nations.

‘Show,’ says Isaiah, ‘the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods’ (Isa. xli. 23): and Jeremiah, contending with the false prophets of peace, challenges them to the same ordeal; ‘When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him’ (Jer. xxviii. 9).

Before we can examine the precise nature of the power thus claimed, or bring forward evidence of its reality, a previous question is forced upon us: Is *any* evidence admissible? Is the claim to supernatural power one that has a right to be heard?

The question, I say, is forced upon us, for, in our day, revelation is not only attacked in *detail*,—not merely the genuineness of this prophecy or the truth of that miracle is

denied,—but men boldly assert that all prophecy and all miracle are wholly incredible, because they imply the agency of a supernatural power. One mode of meeting this assumption is to examine its results.

In the case of prophecy, critics who openly avow or tacitly assume this principle, that any revelation from God is impossible, are driven to adopt many strange and inconsistent theories, in order to explain away the apparent instances of prediction verified by fact.

If the event is undeniable, and the correspondence of the alleged prediction too close to be called accidental, then we are told that the prophecy *must* have been published after the event, and can be nothing more than history written backwards.

Thus new dates and new authors must be invented for many of the prophetic writings, or at least for such parts of them as contain these otherwise inexplicable predictions. But here all agreement ceases; as soon as men attempt to reconstruct the Bible, their language is no longer one; each is at variance

with his neighbour, and inconsistent with himself. The discordant results discredit the common principle from which they are derived.

One who has very ably conducted the defence of revelation by this method, I mean Dr. Payne Smith, says very justly in the preface to his *Bampton Lectures*, that 'the attack made upon the Bible has had no such measure of success as to justify its assumption that prophecy has no supernatural element.'

It seems, however, desirable that this total denial of the possibility of a supernatural revelation should also be met in a more *direct* way, and its grounds examined at the outset, in order that we may be free to enter with unprejudiced mind upon the subsequent examination of evidence; for an assumption, however baseless, when repeated with an air of confidence, as an indisputable truth which admits no question and needs no proof, has commonly far more influence than it deserves. It affects us often unconsciously; and many who by instinct feel its falsehood, without clearly discerning *why* it is false, are confused

and embarrassed, and find a faint mist of uncertainty creeping over truths that ought to be as clear as the day.

It is the more necessary to examine these *a priori* objections, because their importance has been greatly exaggerated in some well-known and widely-circulated speculations upon the evidences of Christianity.

Elaborate attempts are made to put new life into the old objection, that no amount of testimony can make a supernatural interposition credible. Our entire view of the subject, we are told, must be governed by antecedent considerations, dependent on higher laws of belief, and therefore paramount to all attestation.

‘No testimony can reach to the supernatural; testimony can apply only to apparent sensible facts; testimony can only prove an extraordinary and perhaps inexplicable occurrence or phenomenon: that it is due to supernatural causes is entirely dependent on the previous belief and assumptions of the parties.’¹ So far it might seem that the testimony of

¹ *Essays and Reviews* (1st ed.), p. 107.

eye-witnesses is sufficient to establish the truth of external facts, though not to determine their supernatural character.

But again we are taught that the case of miracles depends on purely *physical* contemplations, and therefore no general moral principles, *no common rules of evidence* or logic, can enable us to form a correct judgment upon it: that the question 'involves, and is essentially built upon those grander conceptions of the order of nature, those comprehensive primary elements of all physical knowledge, those ultimate ideas of universal causation, which can only be familiar to those thoroughly versed in cosmical philosophy in its widest sense.'¹

Now, when we reflect that revelation as a message from God to man *can* have no other evidence of fact but some visible sensible sign of an invisible agency, in the natural world but not of it, it is clear that we must either consent to an utter divorce between reason and faith, between fact and doctrine, between nature and religion, or else we must examine these lofty claims of cosmical philosophy to

¹ *Essays and Reviews*, p. 133.

sit as sole arbiter of the reality of the supernatural evidences of revelation.

Let us then see on what grounds it can be asserted that a miracle is either impossible, or, if not absolutely impossible, yet so utterly incredible that all pretended evidence of it may be set aside without examination. First, Is a miracle impossible? I know no other ground on which this can be asserted, except—that ‘there is no God,’—no living, personal Being, distinct from the material universe, and by whom that universe is created, governed, and preserved.

We will not waste time upon this folly of the atheist or the pantheist; but there is a brief answer that may be made to this and to many other antecedent objections which profess to set aside all evidence of a supernatural revelation: they have no place in the argument, for they begin by begging the question at issue.

We do not begin by assuming that there *is* a God, in order to infer from His existence the truth or possibility of a revelation: we do not propose to reason down from the being or nature of God to the reality of prophecy: but

just the converse; we seek to establish by facts the reality of prophecy, in order to infer from it, not the being only, but the active rule and governance,—the wisdom, the providence, and the faithfulness of God. Our appointed duty is to treat of prophecy as an *evidence* of revealed religion;—that is, to prove, not to assume, that there is a ‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.’ To meet us on the threshold of such an argument by the objection that ‘there is no God,’ or that He cannot or does not reveal Himself to man, is to start from the wrong end, and to use a foregone conclusion, in order to shut out inquiry.

Let us pass to the more plausible objections, that a supernatural revelation is incapable of proof, and that it is contradicted by positive laws of nature which admit of no exception.

You have heard the arguments, (1) that testimony can reach only to external facts, not to a supernatural cause; and (2) that of such external facts as are alleged in the case of miracles, none but an accomplished physical philosopher is a competent judge.

These arguments have been too easily accepted, even by devout believers in a Divine revelation : a strong feeling of the sufficiency of the *moral* evidences of Christianity, a conviction that spiritual truth to a spiritual mind shines by its own light and needs no other,—these feelings joined, perhaps, with a natural distaste for the examination of evidence, have led men to admit too readily that miracles appeal to faith only, and find no support in reason.

I believe that this disparagement of the external evidences of religion has been carried to a very dangerous extent : its effect is stated in a tone of subdued satisfaction in an essay which I have already quoted : ‘Miraculous narratives,’ we are told, ‘become invested with the character of articles of faith, if they be accepted in a less positive and certain light ; or perhaps as involving more or less of the parabolic or mythic character ; or at any rate as received in connection with, and for *the sake of* the doctrine inculcated.’¹

Perhaps the best mode of ascertaining the

¹ *Essays and Reviews*, p. 142.

value of such objections is to show by a simple analysis what an alleged miracle really is,—how far it is made up of natural facts, and where its supernatural character begins.

We shall thus find it to be a combination of facts, each of which may be tested by the evidence of the senses; each taken in itself, apart from the rest, is perfectly simple and natural: the combination alone is miraculous, and the truth of that combination is itself proved by the same ordinary evidence of the senses.

An example will make my meaning clearer: it matters not whether we take an imaginary case or one actually recorded; for the question before us at present is not whether we have sufficient evidence of the truth of this or that miracle, but whether we *can* have sufficient evidence of any. We are told in so many words that ‘the essential question of miracles stands quite apart from any consideration of *testimony*: that it would remain the same, if we had the evidence of our *own* senses to an alleged miracle,—that is, to an extraordinary or inexplicable fact: that it is not the *mere*

fact, but the cause or explanation of it, which is the point at issue.’¹

Let us then suppose ourselves to be eye-witnesses of the miracle of all miracles, the raising of the dead to life.

What are the essential facts to be verified?

First, the reality of the death.

That certainly is a fact which may be proved by sensible evidence beyond all possibility of doubt.

Cases of suspended animation may be mistaken through haste or carelessness for real death; but were such mistakes far easier and more common than they are, it would remain not the less certain, that real death *may* be proved by such evidence of our senses as leaves no possibility of error.

How gladly we would doubt, if doubt were possible, as we gaze on the newly dead! But when once the finger of decay has laid its touch upon the face we loved, there is no such awful certainty as that of death.

The infidel himself has told us with derisive scorn, that we need not trouble ourselves to

¹ *Essays and Reviews*, p. 141.

prove that Jesus our Lord was really dead : all that he denies, is that He rose again.¹ This then is the next fact of which we are to suppose ourselves eye-witnesses, the reality of life : and surely we need no science to tell us whether this be a moving, breathing, living man who stands before us with the grave-clothes yet around him, or sits at the table at supper while Martha serves.

His present life, could we forget the past, is a fact as simple, as natural, and as patent to the senses as our own.

But then, lastly, we may also certainly know that this Lazarus, who is now alive, is the same that was dead. *He* knows that he is the same man that he was a week or a month ago ; and his sisters, his friends, who have known him all his life, they too know that he is the same whom they helped a few days ago to lay in the grave.

It is in this identity of him that liveth with him that was dead, that the whole miracle lies ; and this identity also is a plain matter of fact, that may be proved with the utmost

¹ Strauss, *Leben Jesu*.

certainly that the human mind can reach. For of what *can* man be certain, if not of his own identity, and of the identity of one who lives daily and hourly in his sight?

I have chosen this example—the raising of the dead—because it is at once the most important and the most decisive. Upon its truth the Christian's hope of eternal life depends. If this be false or doubtful, no other miracle in the Bible is worth contending for. If *this* can be established, no antecedent objection can make others incredible.

The facts, we have seen, may all be proved by the ordinary rules of evidence with as much certainty as man's senses can warrant; and no science, no philosophy could help to make them more certain.

Do they then prove that the event is supernatural? Do they suffice to meet the objection urged against all miracles, that unless we understand the laws and forces of nature in their full extent, we can never be sure that any event, however marvellous, may not be produced by *natural* causes? ¹

¹ See Farrar, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 153: 'It (the pantheism

We will not be led off into any vain speculations about imaginary laws of nature that *may* be known to a higher intelligence than man's; but so long as human language attaches any definite and intelligible meaning to the words 'nature' and 'natural law;' so long it is impossible to deny that the restoration of life to the dead is an event rightly called 'supernatural,' as surpassing all laws and powers known or conceivable in the present 'nature' of man and of man's world.

If this inference be, as we are told, 'entirely dependent on our previous belief and assumption,' at all events, in the case which I have selected, the previous belief and assumption, that the dead are not raised to life by nature's power, is one that is shared by all mankind—one that the philosopher or the sceptic would be the last to question. To *them*, surely, it is a natural law that the dead rise not. All the boasted certainty that the widest experience,

of Spinoza) admits that the phenomena which we attribute to miracles are facts, but denies their miraculous character. They are the mere manifestation of some previously unknown law, turning up accidentally at the particular moment.'

the most careful experiment, and the surest induction can give to any physical law, belongs most fully to this; and if in any case it can be proved by certain evidence of the senses that this natural law is overruled, it is no assumption, but a *necessary inference of reason*, that the cause is supernatural.

Men may find pretexts for rejecting the evidence alleged in proof of such a miracle as the raising of Lazarus, or our Lord's own resurrection; but they can find *no* pretext for denying that the event, if true, is supernatural, and must be ascribed to the direct agency of One who has power over life and over death.

Such an analysis as I have made of one kind of miracle, may be made of most others; and it will be found that the alleged facts are such as depend upon the ordinary evidence of the senses, and upon that alone, and that the inference of a supernatural cause is required by the clearest dictates of our common reason. The great and only question is that which the objector seeks to exclude altogether from consideration, namely, whether we have in each

case the authentic testimony of competent and faithful witnesses.

Prophecy being a special kind of miracle, may be shown in like manner to be in itself equally capable of plain and positive proof. To one who heard the prophet plainly and clearly foretell such an event as no human foresight could conceive, nor human power effect, and then lived to see that event occur, the facts would be as certain, and the inference as necessary, as in any other kind of miracle. To us, in after ages, the question is, whether the essential facts *are* established by the recorded testimony; and this must be determined in all cases by the ordinary laws of history and criticism.

It seems then that the evidence for miracle and prophecy cannot be excluded on the ground that they are in their very nature incapable of proof.

Our next and last inquiry will be, whether they are rendered incredible by any contradiction to known, positive, and universal truths.

We are told in disparagement of the value

of testimony, that 'no amount of attestation of innumerable and honest witnesses would convince one versed in mathematical and mechanical science, that a person had squared the circle, or discovered perpetual motion;' or 'that on a certain occasion they had seen two and two make five.'¹

It seems astonishing that such examples should be seriously alleged by men of scientific reputation, as having even the slightest analogy to the case of the Christian miracles. We need only notice the argument as a caution to remember the wide difference between what is *contrary to reason*, as in the examples alleged, and what is only *new to experience*.

When we turn to the true masters of practical science, we cannot but thankfully observe many recent indications of a growing feeling, that there is no real antagonism between the claims of revelation and the truths of nature.

The advocates of revealed religion ought not to be less willing to acknowledge the just claims of science, and to show that their faith

¹ *Essays and Reviews*, p. 141.

is not, and cannot be hostile to the researches and conclusions of true philosophy.

The grand result of modern science is, beyond doubt, to extend the range and to confirm the certainty of the primary laws of the material universe. Let us grant all that can be asked; let us put the case in the strongest form, and accept what is called 'the absolute uniformity of physical laws.'

If we will think what the expression really means, we shall find it perfectly consistent with a belief in the direct agency and miraculous interposition of God. It means that *physical* forces have absolutely no power of breaking their established order, of changing their operations and effects; that they are the same, so far as we can trace them, throughout all space and all time; that they are not *free*, not self-moving, nor self-developing; not creative, and therefore not self-created.

It might seem at first to a careless eye, that there is nothing else but change in the infinite variety of the natural world. But experience soon brings to us all the thought which Solo-

mon expresses in the text. In the ceaseless alternations of light and darkness ; in the shifting circuits of the winds ; in the rivers running into the sea, that yet is not full, and floating back again in vapour to the place from whence they came,—he saw the absolute uniformity of natural law, and thus declared it: ‘The thing that *hath* been, it is that which shall be ; and that which *is* done, is that which shall be done : and there is no *new* thing under the sun.’

The modern student of science, each in his own path, tries to follow the phenomena of nature to their very end ; he only finds a never-ending chain, law linked to law,—force gliding into force,—matter passing in Protean change from shape to shape, and ever eluding the grasp that would extort the secret of its birth and native form.

‘We pass,’ says one of the ablest exponents of modern science,¹ ‘to other systems and other suns, each pouring forth energy like our own, but still without infringement of the law which reveals *immutability in the midst of change* ; which

¹ Tyndal on Heat.

recognises incessant transformation or conversion, but neither final gain nor loss.'

... 'The energy of nature is a constant quantity, and the utmost man can do . . . is to shift the constituents of the never-varying total, sacrificing one if he would produce another.'

'The law of conservation rigidly excludes both creation and annihilation: . . . the flux of power is eternally the same. It rolls in music through the ages, while the manifestations of *physical life*, as well as the display of physical phenomena, are but the undulations of its rhythm.'

Eloquent words,—not written indeed in the interest of revelation, and yet, if candidly judged, by no means hostile to it.

The writer speaks of what *man* can do, and rightly maintains that creation or annihilation of a single atom is beyond *his* power: he speaks of the manifestations of *physical life*, *i.e.* of life so far as it is connected with, and dependent on, the laws of matter and its forces. But of *life* itself, and of the *origin* of the world in the sense of *Divine creation*, he is not speaking here; and

elsewhere he confesses that both lie veiled in mystery beyond the reach of science.

What I wish to observe in connection with his words is, that the denial of *man's* power to create or to destroy involves no denial of such a power in God; and that, on the other hand, in the recognition of man's power to *bend* the laws of nature to his use *without breaking them*, to shift the constituents of matter and to change its form, there is a distinct acknowledgment that the absolute uniformity of physical laws does not withdraw them from the controlling influence of a higher power.

The exact nature of the force that lies in man's *Will*, and the way in which it acts on matter, we know not: ¹ but we know that being free and intelligent, it must be of a higher order than forces which act with blind uniformity: and its reality is even better certified than theirs; for we not only see its effects in the material world, but feel its operation in our inmost soul.

¹ The *Ring and the Book*, i. 520.

‘How heart moves brain, how both move hand,
What mortal ever in entirety knew?’

Here, then, we find a very complete answer to the objection, that miracles are not consistent with the absolute uniformity of natural law.

If that absolute uniformity, like a chain of many rigid and inseparable links, can be bent, without breaking, by the will of man, how can it be thought to oppose an unyielding resistance to the will of God?

If in us and in our works matter is controlled by spirit,—if man, who can do nothing *against* natural laws, can *with* natural laws do so much that they cannot do without him,—how can we stop here?—how deny that the laws of matter may and must be submissive to the supreme control of a *Divine* Spirit?—how think it incredible that superhuman effects may be wrought by a superhuman power?

Why may we not see in a miracle an act of God's will, not abolishing His own laws, but guiding them into new combinations, and so bending and subordinating them to higher purposes,—working through the unseen powers of nature effects which they could not have produced in ordinary course, yet effects which fall in afterwards with the general order, and

so disturb not our deep-seated conviction of permanent law?

Such seems to be the character of most of the Christian miracles: we see our Lord not breaking the laws of nature, but quickening, restraining, guiding,—bending them to His will with a knowledge and a power immeasurably beyond the reach of man, and manifestly divine.

And if the greatest of miracles—the restoration of the dead to life—*seems* to be a more positive breach of physical law, who does not welcome such a triumph of spirit over matter, as a deliverance from an unnatural bondage, and a vindication of the higher law of man's true nature? Who does not feel that the manifestation of a power absolute over life and death was needed to confirm man's trembling hope of immortality, and 'to deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage?'¹

And even in this case, whether there be or be not a positive breach of a partial law, there

¹ If resurrection is a breach of physical law, we accept it as a crucial test between those who maintain the omnipotence of *material forces*, and those who believe in a world of *spirit*.

need be none of universal order.¹ For as life comes into the world of matter and vanishes from it, without the least disturbance of that general balance of physical forces which is expressed in the language of science as the one universal law of conservation, so, for aught we know, life may come again.

We have been arguing the credibility of supernatural interposition from the analogy of man's Will as a known power guiding and controlling the action of Nature's forces: there is also a distinct argument to be drawn from the acknowledged limitations of science.

The ablest interpreters of nature are the most candid in confessing that there are endless regions of thought and being beyond their reach: that the *origin* of the material universe is to them inscrutable, its *end* and *purpose* beyond their province: that the mind, running freely along the chain of *natural* phenomena, can never pass from the world of *matter* to the world of *thought*: that when science is ex-

¹ If the resurrection to eternal life is a great law of our being, which falls not within our ordinary experience, and which yet it is good for us to know, the breach of *present* order is amply justified. See Luth. p. 36.

hausted, and the outer margin of all possible discovery is reached, the real mystery of existence still looms, and must ever loom around us, beyond the reach of man's unaided intellect.¹

These are no light admissions ; for in that world of thought, which Science cannot reach, the greatness and the happiness of man, as a spiritual being, lie ;² and it is in that same world, the spirit's home, that strains of heavenly truth have fallen, as we believe, upon the prophet's ear.

Beyond that mystery, which looms around our present existence, we look for the life which fadeth not away ; and if from yonder shore no sign had ever appeared of a mightier power, no utterance ever been heard of a higher will, this absolute uniformity of physical law, this life that ends in corruption and the grave, would crush the soul with a hopeless and intolerable bondage.

¹ See Professor Huxley's Address to the British Association, 1870 ; Tyndal on Heat ; Duke of Argyll's Reign of Law, etc. etc

² Compare Dr. J. H. Newman, *Grammar of Assent* : 'The physicist is thus preparing the way for clearer views of what *must be spiritual*, if it be not uniform with the material.'

But if out of the midst of the cloud and of the darkness a voice has sometime sounded as the voice of God, and a flash as it were of heavenly light has revealed for a moment the uplifted arm; shall we not hail with delight that sign of a power which promises deliverance to the soul?

Shall we not welcome the prophecy that tells of an omniscient mind already working out in secret its great design,—guiding all the operations of nature and all the history of man to one great and glorious end, wherein the seeming contradictions of life and of the world, the great antitheses of spirit and matter, of freedom and necessity, of miracle and law shall all be reconciled in the one grand truth of universal order, in the perfect unity of the new creation in Christ Jesus our Lord?

LECTURE III.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 5TH MARCH 1871.



Prophecy in its relation to the History of Israel.

III.

Prophecy in its relation to the History of Israel.

‘And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.’—2 CHRON. xxxvi. 15, 16.

IN my last lecture I tried to show that the claim which the prophets of Israel make to be bearers of a revelation from heaven is not one that may be set aside without a hearing; for neither reason nor science teach us that such a revelation is incredible.

This morning I shall sketch very briefly the historical aspect of prophecy, — I mean its relation to the general history of the nation. And here we must consider prophecy in its widest sense, as the revelation of God’s

will, and the prophet as one commissioned to *speak for God*.

First then we notice that in this sense prophecy is as old as the Hebrew nation itself, and indeed far older. The life of the nation begins with the age of Moses: but Moses in his writings leads us back to the fountainhead of man's history; and as he traces its course through the dim distance of the world before the flood, and thence through the patriarchal age, he shows us the first dawn of the Divine revelation, breaking through the darkness of that old-world history, and making it bright with the promise of a glorious though far distant day.

But the first prophet of the nation is the founder himself: and from Moses to Malachi prophecy lives on through the history of a thousand years, and then suddenly dies out. For five centuries no living voice is heard; only the ancient prophets though dead yet speak, and the faithful in Israel still listen and still wait. But Israel's day of grace is far spent, and the night of doom at hand, when that Prophet that should come into the world

at last appears: and as the national history closes amid clouds and darkness, the light of prophecy shines out anew in Christ and His apostles, growing into that full splendour of Divine revelation which will never cease to give light unto the world.

Next we remark, that the national life is everywhere closely intertwined with this Divine revelation, which both precedes and survives it. The vital connection is seen most clearly in each great turning-point of the history, and in each master-mind which rules the crisis that it helps to create.

Moses at the very first is brought into living union with the earlier revelation, when God makes Himself known at the bush as the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob: and when sent upon his work of deliverance, the promise by which all his fears are overruled is the promise of the spirit of prophecy, the only difference between Moses and other prophets being, that he who has the greater work to do is gifted with greater powers; 'See! I have made thee *a god* to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be *thy* prophet.

Thou shalt speak all that I command thee, and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh.'

Thus in relation to God, Moses is like any other prophet, an interpreter of the Divine word; but before men, and especially before the proud king of Egypt, Moses is as a god, and puts *his* word into the mouth of Aaron, and makes him *his* prophet: 'He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.'

The same pre-eminence is seen in the after history, especially in the giving of the Law. The very essence of the prophetic gift is direct communication with God; and in this privilege Moses stands supreme. Once only are Aaron and the elders permitted to go up with him into the mount, and to see the glory of the God of Israel; and then the command to them is, 'Worship *ye* afar off, and Moses alone shall come near the Lord: but *they* shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him' (Num. xii. 17).

When the seventy elders were chosen to share with Moses in the government of the people, 'it came to pass that when the Spirit

rested on them they prophesied, and did not cease.' And though Moses himself rightly speaks of it as the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord's own word puts greater honour upon His servant: 'I will come down and talk with thee there, and will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them.'

The envy of Aaron and Miriam only brings out a clearer declaration of the pre-eminence of their younger brother. 'If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches.'

The reason of this higher gift to Moses is in the words, 'faithful in *all* my house.' For the founder of the nation, the lawgiver, the mediator, the supreme ruler and judge both in Church and State, trusted with all power, and found faithful in all God's house, must enjoy a closer, clearer, deeper insight into the will of God than other prophets have.

The great design of the prophetic office here revealed, is to uphold the house of God, *i.e.* His Church and kingdom; for, in Israel, Church and kingdom both are His, and both are one.

The prophet thus appears as the vicegerent and ambassador of God. His work is not limited to new revelations of God's will; he must keep the people mindful of His covenant, and obedient to His law; he must enlighten, purify, and raise them to a worthy sense of their high calling as the chosen race—the one nation to whom God had promised, ‘If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine; and *ye* shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’

On Joshua, whose greatness is wholly derived from Moses, we need not dwell; nor on the age of the Judges, in which the national life, passing further away from the influence of its great founder, begins to wane and languish, and prophecy shines out only here and there with a less pure and vivid light.

Passing on then to the next great stage of Jewish history, we there find the next great prophet, Samuel, the restorer of the law, the reformer of religion, of morals, and of social order, a man full of the same Spirit that was in Moses.

‘The word of the Lord was precious in those days: there was no open vision.’ But prophecy wakes up to shine on Samuel’s birth, in Eli’s promise, in Hannah’s song, in the message of the nameless man of God: ‘I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind.’

If ever history bore the stamp of nature and of truth, we see it in the calling of the child Samuel to be a prophet of the Lord. Call to mind that scene at night, ‘ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was;’ the old man laid down in his place, silent, but sleepless, his heart overcharged with sorrow, his eyes waxing dim that he could not see; the child consecrated from the womb, and kept by God’s grace in more than childlike purity, yet in all the beautiful un-

consciousness of childhood, growing in favour with the Lord and with men: 'Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord revealed unto him.'

All is most simple, clear, and calm; no sudden ecstasy, no trembling rapture, no vision of glory, no tongues of fire, or sound as of a rushing mighty wind, but a voice that scarce breaks the stillness of the night and deepens its solemn peace, as the Spirit of prophecy enters into the spirit of the holy child, 'a gracious, willing guest.' Here at least the supernatural—let us rather call it the divine—is in closest harmony with man's true nature.

The revival of the prophetic gift in Samuel was so marked, that he is commonly called the first of the prophets; rather he was the first to give a new form to the prophetic office. For the greater part of his life Samuel himself, like Moses, was the chief of the whole state; but his latter years were spent in framing and guiding the great political change brought on by the demand of the people, 'Make us a king to judge us, like all the nations.'

When temporal power thus passed for ever

from the prophet's hands, it was the more needful that his spiritual authority should be fully recognised. There must be men who would make their voice heard both by prince and people, reminding them that Jehovah was still the one true King of Israel, and that earthly princes were ministers to do His will.

From this time therefore the prophet bears a more distinct and peculiar office; and his moral ascendancy as the inspired messenger of God is made the more remarkable by the absence of all external power. Even David, the prophet-king, is no exception. As an inspired prophet, it is not with temporal affairs, but with the future destinies of Messiah's kingdom that he deals. As a temporal prince, the Divine voice comes to him, as to others, from without; the message, whether of rebuke or promise, is brought by a Nathan or a Gad,—men whose only weapon is the word of the Lord.

Thus the prophet is still the living voice of God to the men of his own age, and still acts upon the present; but his power is wholly spiritual. He appeals to conscience, to reason,

and to faith; but he is no longer the leader, the ruler, or the judge. His work is now to uphold the cause of righteousness, to guard the purity of religion, to keep alive in Israel men's faith in the promises of God.

Thus, when the temporal kingdom was rent in twain, the prophets of the age found their chief sphere of action in those tribes which, being cut off from the true centre of religious life, fell first into an idolatrous worship of Jehovah, and then into the base and impure heathenism of Baalim and Ashtaroth.

It is in this age that those 'schools of the prophets,' which had been founded by Samuel, rise to their greatest eminence under such mighty masters as Elijah and Elisha. In these schools the so-called 'sons of the prophets' lived together in large societies,—young men devoted to their spiritual leaders, fired by their teaching with fervent zeal for the pure truths of the ancient covenant and law, and trained by their example to a simple, self-denying, and laborious life.

When we consider the period in which these schools arose, and the remarkable fact

that they were all placed within the boundaries of the ten tribes, they seem to have been designed not only by Samuel's foresight, but by God's providence, so to strengthen the influence of the prophetic order in Israel, as to make it an effective check upon the abuse of royal power, the treachery of false prophets, and the growing strength of idolatry and heathenism.

But here we must guard against error. Prophecy itself was never a matter of education; the training of the schools, however useful, was not essential; the greatest prophets sometimes helped to give, but had not themselves received it: the sons of the prophets were not necessarily prophets themselves; they were the disciples, the servants, and, in rare instances, the successors of the prophets.

When he, who used to pour water on Elijah's hand, prayed that a double portion of his spirit might rest upon him, the answer was, 'Thou hast asked a hard thing: if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.'

The spiritual succession might not be be-

queathed by man; for it was neither the inheritance of a family, nor the privilege of a caste. The power of prophecy lay not in the lore of a school, nor the training of a profession, nor the mystery of a priestcraft; it was the gift and calling of God.

Nothing is more striking than this independent character of prophecy. Though full of the noblest patriotism and the warmest sympathies, the prophet is for the most part a solitary man. With no personal ambition, no selfish aim, he stands too often alone against the policy of princes and the desire of the people. Alone, but undaunted, the man of God comes, bidden or unbidden, to deliver his message, in public or in private, to kings and priests, to armies and to nations.

The authority of the prophets was greatest in Israel, where the royal power was least secure. By them the fall of dynasties is declared, and new princes are anointed. From them each royal house, as it proves unfaithful, receives its doom. Jeroboam, Baasha, Jehu, all hear in turn the same sentence: 'Him that dieth in the city the dogs shall eat, and

him that dieth in the field the fowls of the air shall eat.'

False prophets and faithless priests are no less sternly rebuked; the sins of the people are not spared, nor their coming chastisements unspoken.

I do not insist at present upon the truth of predictions or the reality of miracles, but rather on the *moral* greatness of the prophets, and their power over the conscience. Upon their word hangs the issue of peace or war: 'Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel;' so speaks the prophet, and Rehoboam yields.

Theirs was the power, which now¹ we pray for in vain, to soften the cruelties of war, to stay the uplifted sword, and to let the captive host go free.

'My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?'

'Thou shalt not smite them: wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and

¹ Preached during the imprisonment of the French armies in Germany.

water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.’¹

It is in Elijah, above all others, that this moral grandeur rises to its fullest height. With what a noble courage he comes from his refuge in the desert to meet the angry king, who is seeking him everywhere to take his life! How sublime his faith, as he kneels alone before the altar on Carmel in the sight of an apostate nation, a solitary witness for the truth of God! How great his mastery over the guilty conscience, as he spake to Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth, till at those words the trembling king ‘rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and went softly!’

The presence of such a man as Elijah was like the eye of God fixed upon Israel; and so long as faith in God was a living power, the nation looked with awe upon His prophet; but as faith died out, hatred and persecution were the prophet’s reward.

Thus, in Judah, prophecy assumes a new aspect. Over the present it has less control;

¹ 2 Kings vi. 22.

for though the master-spirit of an Isaiah or a Jeremiah still at times can strongly sway the minds of kings and people, yet even they cannot permanently check the growing corruption, nor avert the approaching doom.

Prophecy therefore turns more towards the future. Predictions of the captivity in Babylon are followed by promises of a national restoration, which blend with the brighter visions of Messiah's kingdom.

It is not that the prophet feels less interest in the present fortunes of his people; but as the tragedy deepens, and the times grow darker, the hopelessness of the present *drives* him (humanly speaking) to seek comfort for himself and for the nation in that hope of glory which he sees far off.

Thus he speaks as much for coming ages as for his own. The witnesses of his truth are the generations yet unborn; and for *them* his words must be not only spoken, but recorded.

The same desire now grows in the prophets which grew in Job, when he looked for his Redeemer in the latter days: 'Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were

printed in a book ! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever !'

And their desire has been fulfilled. The words which God's Spirit bade them write upon the roll of a book, have so written themselves upon the hearts of men, that they have lived on, and will live, when the rocks and their writing shall perish for ever.

In this sad age preceding the captivity the prophet himself is an example of suffering patience. The ministry of Jeremiah, extending over more than forty years, is little else than one long and cruel persecution. As we read the record of his sufferings, we almost cease to wonder that men have sometimes applied to him even the picture of that greater Prophet and more awful Sufferer, whom Isaiah shows as 'despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.'

It is to the treatment of the prophets in this age especially that the words of our text refer: 'They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, and there was no remedy.'

It is of them that the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks: 'They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy.'

The last essential change was made when prophecy assumed its written form; and time forbids me to trace its history further. I must only attempt to draw a few brief inferences from this hasty and imperfect sketch of prophecy in its external aspect.

1st. In the first place, we may affirm that prophecy, as it existed in Israel, is a fact unique in the world's history. We may find in other nations a belief in some kind of intercourse between God and man. Oracles, and auguries, and other kinds of divination have, for a time and in a measure, swayed the popular belief, and influenced the events of history. But there is no people, except Israel, whose *whole* history is pervaded and governed by this one principle of belief in a

Divine revelation,—a belief not limited, as in Greece and Rome, to the early dawn of civilisation, and then dying out as the light increases ; but growing ever brighter from age to age, and reaching its meridian splendour when the nation was at the zenith of its greatness. We infer that a fact so singular cannot be explained by causes *common* to all nations and all religions.

2dly. In Israel itself, the prophetic gift is not general, nor even common, but each one in whom it appears is regarded as a man set apart from, and raised above his fellows. He is pre-eminently ‘the man of God.’

We infer that prophecy is not sufficiently accounted for by those religious and social influences which, though peculiar to Israel, are common to *all* Israel. For however singular may be their institutions, however marvellous their history, yet if, from the midst of this people, there stand out in sole pre-eminence men of an office and character unlike all others,—men who rise up from time to time under all forms of government and all changes of fortune,—men whose succession is not

determined by law nor inheritance, nor wealth nor rank nor popular favour, nor by education nor natural gifts, nor even by their own choice and purpose, then the phenomena occurring in the few can never be explained by the causes common to all; and I see not what reasonable explanation can be given but that which the prophets themselves give, when they ascribe all that is peculiar in their gift and office to the calling of God, and to the power of His Spirit working in them.

For *3dly* and lastly, we find this claim of the prophets universally acknowledged by the people among whom they lived, and to whom they were as often messengers of unwelcome reproof as of comfort or promise, and as often objects of fear and hatred as of reverence and wonder.

When the words of such men extort a present obedience even from the unwilling, and inspire a hope of future blessing which lives on when the voice of prophecy is silent, through long ages of national disaster and decline, I think that, apart from all question of the fulfilment of their predictions, the faith which the

prophets inspired in their own nation is itself a strong witness to the truth of their claim.

I do not even touch to-day upon any evidence that might be drawn from the subject-matter of prophecy, and from that great design which gives consistency and harmony to all its varied utterances; but I seek to infer the nature of the prophetic gift from the character of the men in whom it is seen, and from their power over the age in which they lived.

I ask you only to remember what manner of men these Hebrew prophets were, how pure and holy in life, how lofty and disinterested in aim, and then say: If such men affirm that they speak not of themselves, but God speaketh in them, are they not witnesses whom we *must* believe? Are they not most worthy to have been chosen as the bearers of God's messages of judgment and of mercy to Israel and to the world?

LECTURE IV.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER 1871.

Personal Holiness a condition of the Prophetic
Gift.—Caiaphas no Prophet.

I V.

Personal Holiness a condition of the Prophetic Gift.—Caiaphas no Prophet.

‘And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.’—JOHN xi. 49-52.

TO show, as I tried in my last lecture, that the prophets of Israel were men worthy of their great office, was a welcome and an easy task.

For even those who question the supernatural origin of prophecy, agree with us in regarding the Hebrew prophet himself as the ideal of a ‘holy man of God.’

Their theory requires it: for if, as they hold,

prophecy be but the work of men, then the men, in whom so excellent a spirit is found, must be as near divine as may be. Such critics show us the prophet as a man of lofty genius and heroic soul; one who creates the spirit of his age, yet lives and looks beyond it: who, standing above his fellows, tries to lift them up to his own moral height: a man devoted, self-denying, fearless, steadfast, whom neither 'the madness of the people' nor the wrath of kings can shake from his firm purpose—loyal to his country, true to Jehovah, and faithful even unto death.

We admire the noble picture set before us, and heartily agree that it is true.

But what then?

If this be the general character of the prophets of Israel, does it not furnish us with the strongest arguments that we could desire for their *Divine* inspiration?

For first we ask, Can men in whom are seen such truth and wisdom be either deceivers or deceived, when they tell us in the most express and positive terms, that it is the Spirit of God that speaketh in them?

And again we ask, Is there not such an agreement between the character and work of these prophets and the gift they claim, as carries conviction of reality with it,—assuring us that if God ever spake by man, it would be (as far as we can judge) by men like these, and acting as these do?

The principle on which this latter argument rests—viz. that there is a moral fitness and harmony between the human character and work of the prophet and a Divine gift and calling—is the principle which I chiefly desire to illustrate in these lectures. It seems to me to be a kind of evidence well suited to an age in which intellectual doubt is often mingled with moral earnestness; because it is evidence that appeals to our moral reason, and tends to persuade as well as to convince.

When such a work as the transformation of the bond-slaves lusting after the flesh-pots of Egypt into the warlike and well-ordered nation whom Joshua led to the conquest of Canaan, is accomplished by the influence and in the lifetime of a single man; or when a code of laws like that of Moses is so wrought into the con-

science and habits of a people as to become the root of their whole national life from age to age,—we feel that a Moses was the right man for such a work, but that even a Moses had need of more than man's power to accomplish it.

Or again, when the rise of a prophet greater than himself is foretold by a prophet so great as Moses; when the advent of a kingdom of righteousness and peace, which shall know no end, is sung by an earthly king so great and so noble-hearted as David; or when the mingled glories and sufferings of Messiah are foreseen by a spirit so grand and yet so tender as Isaiah's, breathing out his very soul in sorrow for the degenerate age in which he lived, and giving to ages yet unborn those high and holy thoughts that shine on like the stars for ever,—when such men tell us that the Spirit of the Lord is speaking in them, I say that between the effect wrought in and by the man, and the *Divine* power to which he ascribes it, there is a moral harmony that carries the strongest conviction of truth to the candid mind.

But what if all these conditions should be altered? What if in other cases no such con-

sent be found between the prophet and his theme, but holy thoughts and gracious purposes of God seem to come to us from the lips of *unholy* men? What shall we say then? Is all our reasoning overthrown by these seeming contradictions? Must we confess that the Holy Spirit speaks in the same manner through holy and through wicked men?

We can only answer such questions by examining those instances which seem most strikingly to contradict our principle of a moral fitness between the human agent and the use which God makes of him. And no more startling exception, as it seems, to this rule could be found, than that which is described in our text, and referred to again in this morning's lesson, that 'Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.'

The evangelist recognises in these words of Caiaphas no mere accidental or unaccountable coincidence with the event, but a real prediction: 'This spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he *prophesied*.'

The subject too of the prediction is no

common matter, but one of the greatest and holiest mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the redeeming, and reconciling, and saving power of the death of Christ: 'He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but also that he might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.'

Further, we must remember that since the voice of ancient prophecy had sunk into silence, the *sufferings* of Messiah had passed from the thoughts of the nation; His glories only were desired and looked for. Jesus indeed had spoken of His approaching death and of blessings to flow from it, but as yet even His disciples understood none of these things.

What then? Is Caiaphas also among the prophets? Is he chosen before all others to reveal a sacred truth that has not dawned as yet upon the minds even of the apostles?

Is there not something at first sight very startling, something even repulsive to the moral sense, in the thought that God could make choice of such a man for such a purpose?

In trying to meet this difficulty fairly and candidly, we must be careful to distinguish two questions which are quite independent :

1st, Why was Caiaphas chosen at all to utter this prophecy ? and 2dly, When chosen, was he employed in a manner appropriate to his moral nature ?

These two questions are really distinct and independent ; for if we could discern no reason at all for the *choice* of Caiaphas,—if we were obliged to say, ‘Such was God’s will, we know not why,’ and so to leave the first difficulty wholly untouched,—it would be none the less important, none the less satisfactory, to be able to show that Caiaphas was only used as evil men may be and are used, as instruments of God’s providence, without any violation of moral order.

First then, can we find any reason why Caiaphas should be chosen as the organ of this particular prophecy ?

We have no need to invent reasons, nor to travel in search of them beyond the one circumstance which St. John thrice emphatically notices in connection with this utterance of

Caiaphas, that he was 'high priest that year.'

It is in the *office* therefore and not in the man that we must seek an explanation of God's choice of His instrument.

We are reminded here by some, that in ancient times a sort of prophetic character attached to the high priest as bearer of the Divine oracle; that within his breastplate, close upon his heart, lay those mysterious gems, Urim and Thummim, which at the high priest's prayer flashed back the answer of God in *light* and *truth*.

But the explanation seems insufficient; the Apostle could hardly have been thinking of an inferior kind of divination, which was growing obsolete even in the days of David, and passed away for ever when the light of prophecy grew strong and clear.

It is more to the purpose to remember that the priesthood after the order of Aaron,—an institution Divine in its origin, and pervading with its influence the whole religious life of the nation,—was passing away. That priesthood, while offering to the faithful Israelite

a present mode of access to Jehovah, was also in its whole design and ministration a type—a wonderfully complete and elaborate type—of the eternal priesthood of the Son of God.

This typical ordinance reached its highest significance in the personal ministration of the high priest, as he once in each year entered alone within the veil to sprinkle the mercy-seat with the blood of that sacrifice which was the special symbol of Christ's atoning death.

The office had often been allowed to sink below its true dignity, and never so low as now: from Aaron to Caiaphas was a fall indeed.

Should such a priesthood perish in its dishonour without one token that, however degraded by man, it was still sacred in the eye of God?

Should a type so significant pass away without rendering its last testimony to the great Antitype so long foreshadowed, and now ready in His season to be revealed?

It was my privilege last year to listen with charmed ear to the lamented Henry Melville

as he preached upon this prophecy of Caiaphas. Would that I could recall for you the glowing fancy and the soft music of speech with which the matchless preacher of our youth adorned his theme, as he compared that last dark year of the typical priesthood to an evening when the sun goes down blood-red in a troubled stormy sky! As then through the gathering darkness there bursts a last gleam of momentary splendour to shed a glory round the death-bed of the day; even so in these words of Caiaphas we may see a parting gleam of heaven's prophetic light, rekindling for a moment the ancient glory of the priesthood of the order of Aaron.

Nor is it unimportant that this prediction was uttered not only by an enemy testifying to the innocence of Jesus, but by an enemy who in virtue of his office became the chief agent in His death.

We may recognise surely a Divine wisdom, more doubtfully perhaps a Divine irony,¹ in thus using the chief priest of the Jewish Church, and the president of the council by

¹ Ebrard.

which Jesus was condemned, to declare the Divine purpose of His sacred death.

Thus then the evangelist appears to have given a sufficient account of the choice of Caiaphas, when he says that 'being high priest that year, he prophesied.'

Let us pass on to consider the mode in which the instrument thus chosen was employed. Caiaphas prophesied; but was he therefore in any sense a prophet? Was he moved in any way by the Holy Ghost? Or was he, as some have thought, driven by an *evil* spirit to provoke the Sanhedrim to put Jesus to death?

This last notion we need not, I think, discuss; it explains nothing, but puts greater moral difficulties in the way of belief, and hardly agrees with the statement, that 'being high priest that year, he prophesied.'

Was he then moved by the Holy Spirit?

When we consider the general character of the man, and the meaning which his words evidently had for himself and for the council, all must agree in this at least, that Caiaphas was wholly unconscious of that other meaning which St. John discerned afterwards.

The mind of Caiaphas was full of the craft that murders the innocent to save itself: how could it admit any conception of the sublime and heavenly love which alone breathes truth into the thought, 'It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not'? Could the Spirit of God put such a thought as that into the mind of such a man? The notion is irreverent and profane.

In another view, it is morally incredible. Caiaphas was wicked, few perhaps more wicked; but he was still human: to suppose that he had even the faintest glimpse of the purpose of Divine love in Christ's death, and yet acted as he did, is to make him a monster or a fiend. Could the thought have entered his mind, that Jesus would lay down His life for the people, for His enemies, for such as Caiaphas himself,—the heart most hardened in wickedness must have turned back from its cruel cold-blooded policy. It is as much against human nature as against the holiness of God to suppose that the *mind* of Caiaphas was even touched by the Spirit of prophecy.

We thus come to another view more commonly received, that the Holy Spirit took possession, as it were, of the man, and used him as a mere machine, putting words into his mouth, as a musician puts breath into a pipe.

‘Grace,’ says Chrysostom, ‘used his mouth only, and touched not his base heart. See how great is the power of the Spirit! Out of a wicked mind He brought forth words laden with admirable prophecy.’

If this were true, we should have here one clear example, though not a very favourable one, of the mechanical mode of inspiration.

Our objection to this view lies not against a *supernatural* influence (which *we* also maintain), but against the *unnatural* mode in which it is supposed to act.

We cannot read the narrative of St. John in its plain, simple meaning, without feeling that Caiaphas is presented as thinking his own thoughts, and uttering them in his own words.

If the after-event showed that those words were prophetic of a holy mystery, their pre-

sent effect on the council showed no less plainly that they were the natural expression of a selfish and wicked policy.

Here then we have to recognise, not any unnatural restraint of human freedom in its own proper sphere of action, but only its subordination to a power acting in a higher sphere.

Caiaphas was free to speak as he would, even as we are free, yet 'he spake not (wholly) of himself;' both thought and speech were subordinate, as human action ever is, to that Divine providence which ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth.

How that power overruled the speech, and yet left the speaker free, we know not: but the difficulty is not peculiar to this case; it is part of the universal and insoluble mystery of God's omnipotence and man's free will.

But while we can never understand the mode in which the Divine providence acts, we recognise its ordinary effects, both in the history of ages and in the course of our own lives. Its more special purposes and influ-

ences can only be known with certainty when expressly declared, as here, in God's own word.

A moment's reflection shows that this superintending providence, to which we ascribe the prophecy of Caiaphas, is the first essential element in *every kind* of prophecy; for none can frame the prediction but He who brings the event to pass.

What makes the case of Caiaphas exceptional is, that this one element here works alone; while in prophecy strictly so called it is combined with other powers, Divine and human.

The unconscious prediction of Caiaphas was in fact a type rather than a prophecy,—a sign, unobserved at the time, whose meaning was afterwards to be made known. It was the high priest that spake, and his words, like his whole office, were made to bear a typical significance, of which he knew nothing, and in which we acknowledge no mere coincidence, but a Divine purpose, because an inspired evangelist affirms it.

Here then in the special character of the

prophecy we find that moral propriety of which I have spoken.

None was so fit in all Israel as the high priest to foretell the blessings which should flow from the sacrifice of the death of Christ, but none more unworthy as a man than Caiaphas. Accordingly, there is no honour put upon the man, no use made of the higher faculties, no living contact of his spirit with the Spirit of God, no spark of heavenly wisdom kindled in his soul; but God's providence alone, acting in its own higher sphere, gives the prophetic import to his words, and turns his wicked thoughts into a channel where they run side by side, yet never mingling, with God's own holy truth.

And if in this case, where at first all seemed so discordant, we find that there is after all no violation of moral order, but a certain fitness and propriety in the use of such a man, much more may we look for a true moral harmony in the higher and purer and more perfect strains of prophecy.

There too we must not overlook that simplest and most fundamental element of all

prediction, which we have seen distinct and separate in this of Caiaphas.

But even where the Spirit of God enters most closely into living union with the spirit of man, calling out all his powers into full play, and turning his highest faculties to noblest use; where wisdom, sagacity, and experience combine with faith and hope to give the clearest forecast of the future; and even where the page of prophecy shines brightest with human genius, where it reflects most vividly the character of its author, and breathes most fully what men call the spirit of the age,—even there we must remember that human speech and thought are but the vesture, or at most the bodily form of prophecy; its soul and substance is that eternal truth which can have no other author but Him who declareth the end from the beginning, and calleth the things that be not as things that be.

LECTURE V.

PREACHED ON SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY, 4TH FEBRUARY
1872.



Germ of Prophecy derived from the Primitive
Revelation.—The idea of God.

V.

Germs of Prophecy derived from the Primitive Revelation.—The idea of God.

‘I am the Lord that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself ; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad ; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish ; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers.’—ISA. xliv. 24–26.

IF the prediction of future events were the sole purpose of prophecy, we need not seek for any other cause or condition of its existence than that which, in the case of Caiaphas, we found in the overruling providence of God.

Looking back from the fulfilment upon the prediction, men might say, Surely God was in those words, and we knew it not. But the prophet would have had no hold upon his own

age; his office would not have brought him into living contact with his fellows, would have given him no present influence over their thoughts.

It would have been useless in such a case to inquire into the mode of inspiration, or its working in the prophet's mind; the man might be wholly passive, and the mode of inspiration simply mechanical; or, as in the case of Caiaphas, there might be no inspiration at all, but only the hidden and unsearchable power which guides the movements of the moral world, — the silent secret working of

‘A divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will.’

But this is not the view which the Bible presents of the prophet's work. If he is a revealer of things to come, he is also a messenger of God's present will, and an interpreter of His ways of old.

The future which is shown to him is, in the mind of God, already rooted in the past, and growing out of the present; for the truths of eternity embrace all time, and reflect their light on every side.

When the prophet lifts up his voice to be heard by distant ages, he still speaks to the men of his own time; and his message to them is like the word of which Moses spake, 'It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off; but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

Thus to his own age the prophet is above all a preacher of righteousness: his work is to enlighten and to admonish, to chasten and to nourish the true life of the holy nation; to keep alive men's faith and hope, and to make them of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.

If then in so many ways the prophet is to be the interpreter of God to man, his mind must be in active communion with that Divine mind whose thoughts he interprets, as well as with those to whom he interprets them; and for such communion both prophet and people have need of special preparation. If new truths are to take root and grow, they must be planted in a soil which has first been fitted to receive them: otherwise there will be a want of harmony; the supernatural will

not work *with* nature : the voice of the Lord will be as the voice of an unknown God ; the message from heaven will be strange and unintelligible even to the prophet ; it will be wasted and misspent upon the people.

This, we may be sure, can never be the case with true prophecy ; God does not work thus in the material world, much less in the moral and spiritual.

Can we then trace a special preparation for Hebrew prophecy ? We say that it stands alone in the world's history ; that there is nothing of the same kind, nothing really and essentially like it in the records of any other people. Is there a corresponding preparation for it,—any singular course of training to fit men for so singular a gift ? Is the acknowledged history of the Hebrew nation, is the known character of their religion, different from those of other nations, and different in such a way that it may be said, ' Here is a people who ought to be better prepared than others to receive a revelation from God,—to understand, and believe, and obey it. Here if anywhere we may look for

men fit, so far as men can be fit, to hold close and direct communion with their Maker, to be enlightened by His Spirit, to hear His voice, and to interpret His messages to mankind?’

If such special preparation is manifest to every thoughtful reader of the Old Testament,—if it can be traced through the whole history of the people of Israel,—then we may surely say that this coincidence makes the appearance of prophecy in Israel alone more natural and more intelligible; that this correspondence between the requirements of a Divine revelation and the wonderful history of the only people among whom any well-attested claim to such a revelation is found, is a strong moral evidence that the alleged revelation is what it claims to be—the word of the same God whose providence has fitted and prepared one chosen nation to receive it.

So far as this preparation of which we speak is common to the prophets and the people alike, we may expect to trace its origin in the primary ideas of the national religion, in the prevalent belief concerning the nature of God and of man, and of their relations to each

other. For these are the foundations upon which the possibility of prophecy or any kind of revelation depends. No prophet could ever have risen up in Israel, nor would any have been found to listen to his message, unless on both sides there had been a profound belief in God not merely as a hidden providence, but as a living spirit ever present in the world, and holding converse with the spirit of man.

Whence then comes this conception of God which we find so powerful in the prophetic age, and without which prophecy would have been impossible?

Is it a new faith in Israel? Has it been brought in by the prophets themselves? Or, was it handed down from generation to generation, being in fact the same faith which we find in the earliest record of what claims to be a primitive revelation?

Our argument thus leads us back to the first chapters of Genesis. Is it true, as some say, that their teaching is obsolete, fit only for children? Have they really lost their power over manly minds that read them thoughtfully and try to follow out their mean-

ing? I cannot think it possible. Only try for a moment to realize the thoughts which are presented in the first short sentence, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

The least and the simplest idea there is 'the heavens and the earth,' the whole visible universe grasped in one clear steady view as the work of an invisible Creator. So far our senses and our reason help us to know in part and to see in part: but 'the beginning,' what is that? The birth of time! The moment before which no other moment was!

Or what do we understand of creation?—the act by which a world arose where nothing was before!

It is useless to dwell upon such ideas after we have once perceived their nature; they only grow the more incomprehensible the more we try to bring them within the compass of the human mind. But it is not useless to mark how the Bible deals with such thoughts as these; to observe with what marvellous ease and simplicity the sacred writer speaks of them; with what a natural and unembar-

raised grace he moves among these mysteries of eternity as among familiar things. There is not a trace of that wordy and barren speculation under which human science so often tries to cloak its ignorance; but the greatest thoughts are clothed in the simplest language. It is not the style of man striving and straining to reach up to thoughts which lie far above out of his sight; rather it is the voice of Divine condescension, the language in which perfect wisdom imparts just so much of its own thoughts as the finite mind can bear.

Our present concern, however, is not so much with the origin, nor with the beauty and truth of this earliest revelation, as with its influence upon the belief of the people of Israel and their prophets.

Our question is,—Can we find here the origin of those ideas concerning God, which were so peculiar to the Hebrews, and without which neither prophecy nor a belief in prophecy could have existed among them?

We are under no temptation to strain the natural meaning of the sacred text, or to force into its teaching thoughts which do not

properly belong to it; all that we need to look for is a beginning, a germ of the later faith; and I think no one can read those first pages of the Bible, thoughtfully and reverently, without feeling that there is a germ—a very fruitful and quickening germ — of that same faith which we afterwards see growing and ripening into the rich harvest of prophetic teaching.

I find then in those opening words of Genesis the root of nearly all essential truth concerning God; I find also, what is still more remarkable, an absolute exclusion of all essential error.

‘In the beginning God’—could any one of us have expressed so briefly, so simply, and yet so accurately the idea of an eternal self-existent Being? And is there not a starting-point here for future revelations?

When Moses at the bush first heard the sacred name, ‘I AM THAT I AM,’ it must have been a preparation and a help to his labouring thoughts to have known before, that this eternal self-existence was the very attribute of God which stands foremost in the earlier revelation.

It would be easy to show how strong an influence those first words of Genesis had upon the prophets: our text may suffice as an example; for it shows how closely Isaiah connected the two thoughts of creation and revelation, declaring that He who in the beginning stretched forth the heavens and spread abroad the earth is the same God who 'confirmeth the word of His servant the prophet, and performeth the counsel of His messengers.' But the lasting effect of those simple words, 'In the beginning,' and the preparation which they laid for all subsequent revelation is most clearly felt, when we hear them re-echoed again and again in all the chief writings of St. John, as the phrase by which he loves to express the deity of the Eternal Word.

When we pass to the statement that 'God created the heavens and the earth,' we find in the simplest expression of an all-important truth, the absolute exclusion of manifold errors into which human reason has fallen in its attempts to imagine the creation of a world.

That the world is its own creator, that matter and spirit are one substance, that the

higher nature is developed out of the lower, that universal order has arisen without a designing and originating mind,—such are a few of the common errors of ancient and modern atheism, which the simple words of Scripture most effectually exclude. Had any one of them been permitted to lurk beneath the primitive account of creation, there would have been a canker at the root of that first great truth, which grew up in all its purity and perfection only in that nation which gave birth to the prophets,—the truth of one living God, Creator of the world and all that is therein.

But there is a more subtle error in modern speculation, which admits the existence of a personal God, accepts His will as the cause and His wisdom as the thought which gave being and order to the world, and having thus got over the first great difficulty of a beginning, and a creation, acknowledges no further need of God's help, but hands over the whole government of the world to secondary causes and established laws.

This view, which of course makes prophecy

and all revelation impossible, is directly opposed to that idea of God which meets us in the first pages of the Bible. All that is true in the theory of the completeness of creation and the permanence of its laws we find in the Bible also; God looked upon every thing that He had made, and saw that it was very good, and then rested from all His work which He had made. But this rest of complacency is no withdrawal from the active government of the world. On the contrary, in the story of paradise and of the world before the flood, God's voice is ever speaking, and His presence everywhere felt; and it seems in the childlike simplicity of the sacred narrative as if heaven were nearer then to earth, and man in closer communion with his Maker.

Thus then the belief in a living God,—a God of knowledge and of power,—a God ever present in the world, ordering and guiding all things according to the counsel of His will, and from time to time making known that will in direct communication to His chosen servants the prophets,—this belief, which is the very

first condition of prophecy, and without which it could not be imagined, much less be true,—this belief which so remarkably distinguishes the history of Israel from that of every other nation, has its natural root in that view of God and of the world which Israel possessed in the first records of revelation.

Nor is this the only sign found there of a preparation for the subsequent work of the prophets.

If we remember how prone the people of Israel were for many ages to fall off into the various idolatries of the neighbouring nations,—if we reflect how large a portion of the prophets' writings have reference to this perverse tendency, and how hard a task they had to maintain the pure faith in one living God, we see that no better preparation for this portion of their work could be made than is made in this first revelation. The truth which they have to enforce could not have been more plainly taught, nor the sin which they have to rebuke more clearly condemned.

Again we are sometimes told that Jehovah is represented in the Old Testament as a local

and national deity,—the God of Israel, but not the God of the heathen.

What little foundation can be found for such an objection (and it is little indeed) lies in the tendency of the Jews to narrow the teaching of their Scriptures, and not in that teaching itself; it was a tendency, too, not so much to limit the idea of God or of His universal dominion, as to claim His exclusive favour and protection for themselves.

Such a defect in the national character, formed as it was under the Mosaic dispensation, was perhaps inevitable. There was a danger inherent in the special covenant which separated Israel from among the heathen to be the sole witness and guardian of revealed truth. It is hardly needful to remind you how earnestly the prophets contend against such narrow tendency; how eagerly they look forward to the time when their God shall be known as the King of all the earth, and His name shall be great among the Gentiles.

May not then that larger spirit have been fostered in them by the earlier revelation? Must not their minds have been naturally

opened to embrace the prospect of a universal kingdom of God, in which all nations should share His blessing,—when on the first page of that which they received as His own word they found Him already revealed as the God of all the earth, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh?

It is not without a purpose of preparation that the great foundations of a universal religion are laid so broad and deep upon the first page of the oracles of God.

It has been well said of the description there given of the creation of the world, that its meaning always seems to be a meaning ahead of human science, not because it anticipates the results of science, but because it is independent of them, and seems as it were to run round the outer margin of all possible discovery.¹

This remark, which was first made by Augustine,² is not less true if applied to the revelation of the nature of God. Of that, too, we may say, ‘Yes, Moses had in view, and in his spirit, when he traced those words, all that

¹ The Reign of Law.—ARGYLL.

² Confessionum, lib. xii. c. 31.

we can ever discover of the truth, even all that has escaped us hitherto or escapes us still, but which may yet be discovered in them.'

That mine of truth was not unknown to the prophets, and their minds could not be insensible to the power of words 'so sublime in their simplicity and so rich in their reserve.'¹

They had begun to learn the language of the Spirit there ; so that when His voice came in its living power to themselves, they were ready to hear what the Lord God would say unto them.

¹ The Reign of Law.—ARGYLL.

LECTURE VI.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 3^d MARCH 1872.



The Human Conditions of Prophecy found in the
Divine Image.—Gen. ii.

V I.

The Human Conditions of Prophecy found in the Divine Image.

Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker,
Ask me of things to come concerning my sons ; and concerning the works of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it.'—ISA. xlv. 11, 12.

WE have seen how the first page of the Bible prepares the way for all subsequent revelation, by making known a God, whose life and thought and love go forth from Himself into the world which He created and sustains.

That is the first condition of prophecy,—a God who can reveal Himself and His will. The second is a corresponding faculty in man,—a spiritual sense to hear and understand God's voice.

What does the primitive revelation teach on this point? Is its account of man's origin,

nature, and relation to God peculiar to the Bible? Does it correspond in this peculiarity to the faith which afterwards prevailed in Israel? Does it tend to make the reception of Divine truth more easy and natural to the prophet, and more credible to the people? In short, does it help to prepare the way for prophecy in later ages?

Turning once more for an answer to the ancient record of creation, we find its order very significant. When the heavens and the earth have been formed, and fitted to sustain life; when the lower animals have all been made each after his kind, there is a pause in the work. The Creator seems as it were to take counsel. He gives utterance to a new and nobler thought: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.'

That new creative word, declaring the law of man's nature, teaches that he is made after another kind from all that were before. Linked he may be to each 'moving creature

that hath life,'—and it matters not how closely linked,—on the lower side of his nature, by all that is of the earth, earthy, by all the functions of bodily life, by sensation, by appetite, by instinct, by every degree of intelligence with which the lower animals are endowed; but he is raised far above them all, and fitted to have dominion over them, by the likeness, which they do not share, to the God who made both him and them.

On the other hand, this idea of an image throws a wonderful light upon the relation of man to his Maker. It marvellously combines the clearest distinction between the Divine and human natures, with the entire dependence of the one upon the other, and with an affinity so close, that thought may be reflected in thought, and will impressed upon will.

I think we may confidently say, that these great primary ideas which lie at the root of prophecy,—a God who speaks from heaven, and a spiritual sense in man responsive to God's voice,—have never been so luminously and so impressively displayed as in that language of the old Hebrew Scriptures,—language,

of which it has been said by a great critic, that the pen of the writer seems to tremble with joy as it repeats its strokes:¹ 'So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.'

We might fairly infer, that such a doctrine found in this venerable record must have had an influence upon the prophets of later ages; but we are not left to infer it. We can clearly trace in their writings the same peculiar ideas of man's origin and relation to his Maker. And it is the more interesting to do so, because we are sometimes told by those who value the Old Testament lightly, that it fails to present the true relation between God and man; that it knows nothing of that most tender and attractive thought, 'the Fatherhood of God.'²

Certainly, if this were so, the writers could not have fully caught the spirit of that earliest revelation. There God is most clearly seen not only as a Creator, but as a Father, imparting to man a portion, or, to say the very least, a likeness of His own nature.

¹ Ewald.

² Young, *Christ of History*, pp. 131, 139.

But let the prophets speak for themselves. Let us hear for instance how Isaiah cries to God in the name of the repentant people: 'Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting.'

Mark how expressly the prophet appeals from the forfeited privileges of special covenants made with Israel or with Abraham, to that primitive relation wherein God embraces the whole human race in a Father's love. So if we turn to the last page of prophecy, we find Malachi rebuking the treacherous and unbrotherly conduct of the priests and Levites, by appealing not to the law, nor the covenant, nor to any of the special ties which bound Israel together as a chosen race and a peculiar people, but to the wider brotherhood of man, as based upon the unity of a Divine origin: 'Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?'

It is interesting and important to our argu-

ment to notice further how this relation of Fatherhood is regarded as being specially renewed for every soul of man; for the distinction drawn in the Epistle to the Hebrews between the fathers of our flesh and the Father of spirits, is a distinction fully expressed in the Old Testament.

There too it is Jehovah 'who formeth the spirit of man within him,' who is 'the God of the spirits of all flesh.' There too we are taught that 'the spirit shall return to God who gave it.'

To those who thus speak of man's relation to God, each soul that is born into the world has a divine as well as a human father. Each has its creation as well as its birth; each is a link in the order of natural development, and at the same time a new and particular form of the 'image of God.'¹

Not only Adam is in this sense, as St. Luke calls him, 'the son of God,' but every man can say with equal right what Elihu does say in the book of Job, 'The Spirit of God hath made me; the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.'

¹ Compare Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 74.

Now it is easy to see how this belief, that God is the true Father of our spirits, lies as a necessary condition at the root of all religion and all revelation. It is vain and futile to try, as men have been trying, not merely to show how man's body may have been developed out of the lower organisms of animal life, but also to trace the development of mind out of matter, and of conscience out of instinct, and then to profess that all this is consistent with religion and with the hope of immortality.

If man's spirit is the creature of development, his only possible creed is fatalism, his only immortality an endless series of generations, each perishing for ever as it passes away and is replaced by another.

But with that view of man's nature which we find in Genesis, and find in the prophets also, we can understand how every man, while inheriting the characteristics, good and evil, of his parents, his family, and his race, has also an independent and peculiar character of his own.

His moral nature thus regarded is not merely a necessary and inevitable result of his

place in a long series of development; it has also a distinct and independent origin, — a freedom, and therefore a responsibility of its own.

This direct relation of every individual soul to God, and the obligations which flow from it, are most clearly and forcibly stated in the well-known passage of Ezekiel: ‘Behold,’ says God, ‘all souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.’

We see at once how a belief, which thus quickens the moral sense and kindles the affections, by bringing each soul into direct responsibility to God as its Father, must have been to the prophets the very life of their own personal religion.

It is also an essential condition of their prophetic office and work, as based upon a special communion with God. We see this in our text,

where the revelation of the future is viewed as a part of God's fatherly care for His children : ' Ask ye me of things to come concerning my sons ; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.'

They who believe that there is in man's soul a likeness to God,—a likeness not simply derived through the fathers of our flesh, but impressed anew (as the prophets have taught us) upon each new-born soul by the Father of spirits,—must believe also that man is nearer to God, and capable of closer, truer union with Him than with any other being.

Perhaps this great truth, that man's very nature is designed for communion with God, has never been better stated than by Richard Hooker :¹ ' Then are we happy when fully we enjoy God as an object wherein the powers of our soul are satisfied even with everlasting delight ; so that although we be men, yet, by being unto God united, we live as it were the life of God. Complete union with Him must be according unto every power and faculty of our minds apt to receive so glorious an object.

¹ *E. P.* Book I. c. xi. 2, 3, and 5.

Capable we are of God, both by understanding and by will; by understanding, as He is that sovereign truth which comprehendeth the rich treasures of all wisdom; by will, as He is that sea of goodness, whereof whoso tasteth shall thirst no more.'

Such a quotation, I am sure, needs no apology; but let me ask you to observe how this great master of the English language, and greatest of English divines, amid the strength and fulness of his statements, and all the fervour of his eloquence, never loses his calm judgment, nor suffers himself to be betrayed into exaggeration.

He speaks not of goodness originating in man, but of a desire after goodness,—an impulse to improve and delight in it.

He ascribes to man's spirit no power to discover Divine truth, but a capacity to receive it. He tells us, with an ancient father, that 'truth, which is the secret of the Most High, cannot be compassed with that wit and those senses which are our own: that God has not left man in darkness, but has given the light of truth as a free gift, that He might both

show the nothingness of human wisdom, and set the wanderer in the path that leadeth unto immortality.'¹

Such teaching draws out the true meaning of the Divine image, showing us how man is most dependent upon his Maker in those very faculties which exalt him highest above the other creatures of God's hand.

But this natural dependence of the soul upon God for its happiness, these desires and capacities of knowledge and of love, contain in themselves a pledge and promise of a revelation by which alone they can be satisfied.

God's wisdom and goodness both assure us that He would never have implanted in our nature a desire which must remain for ever unsatisfied, or a faculty never meant to be employed upon the only object worthy of it.

This view therefore of man's nature, drawn from the first page of revelation, is precisely that which would best prepare the prophets to hear and to obey God's voice.

We trace the actual influence of such a belief, as often as we hear them confessing

¹ Lactantius, lib. I. cap. i.

their need of Divine illumination, and longing for a closer communion with God.

When the psalmist cries out that his soul is athirst for the living God; when he prays, ‘O send out Thy light and Thy truth, and let them lead me!’ or when Isaiah (xxvi. 8) exclaims, ‘With my soul have I desired Thee in the night: yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early,’—we cannot help seeing that the whole soul was possessed with a fervent desire for conscious union with God, and for fresh knowledge of His truth; nor can we doubt that if a Divine revelation was to be made, this was precisely that state and disposition in which the spirit of the man was best fitted to respond to every impulse, every breath of the Spirit of God,—

‘Obedient as the lute
That waits upon the touches of the wind.’

Prophecy to such a soul could not be a strange and unnatural thing; it was Nature’s highest, holiest effort, crowned and rewarded with the gift of heavenly grace.

On one other point in the earliest revelation

I must touch, but very briefly,—the account of the origin of man's sin. Its influence upon the subject and development of Messianic prophecy may be considered hereafter. At present I have to notice only its preparatory influence upon the prophet's mind.

Interpret as we may that history of paradise and of the fall, the great spiritual truths embodied in it can neither be mistaken, nor their power denied.

The reality of temptation, the consciousness of sin, the misery resulting from it, are among the most certain of all truths; they are what each man knows most surely,—the thoughts and feelings of his own mind.

These facts of inward experience—temptation and sin, suffering and self-reproach—which are some of the chief moving forces of religion on man's side, are combined in that story of the fall with the yet mightier power of hope.

The promise that 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head' may be very general and undefined. The meaning which we see in it may not have been clear at first;

but the words do certainly convey some promise of deliverance from temptation, and of victory over sin. They thus point, however vaguely and dimly, to the satisfaction of man's deepest wants, and the fulfilment of his purest and brightest hopes.

While the power of such thoughts and feelings upon the prophets may be traced everywhere in their writings, it is nowhere more striking than in the descriptions given by the three greatest prophets of the visions in which each received his first Divine call.

'Woe is me!' said Isaiah, 'for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'

Jeremiah is overwhelmed with the feeling of human weakness: 'Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak, for I am a child!'

Ezekiel, receiving the roll that is written within and without with 'lamentations and mourning and woe,' no sooner begins to feed upon those bitter thoughts, than they become in his mouth 'as honey for sweetness.'

In each case the Divine voice is heard amid the deepest and most overwhelming feelings of human weakness and misery and sin. It is nothing but the firm assurance of God's presence in that supernatural call, that sends them forth with courage to their task. The sign to Isaiah is the live coal from the altar, that touches his lips and purges away his sin. To Jeremiah it is the outstretched hand of the Lord touching his mouth, and putting His own words therein. To Ezekiel it is the Spirit lifting him up and carrying him away, notwithstanding all the bitterness and heat of his soul, because the hand of the Lord was strong upon him.

The miraculous sign is thus in each case united with the soundest moral sentiments, with a deep feeling of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Divine reconciliation, the sanctifying and enlightening power of the Spirit. 'Such a miracle,' it has been well said, 'does not disturb or violate man's moral nature, but purifies, sanctifies, animates, and renews it.'

With these examples before us, we cannot

doubt that the constant belief of the prophets, and the feelings that swayed their minds in the moments of highest inspiration, were such as, we have seen, would be fostered by that first record of creation and of the fall.

If then the highest aim of religion is to enlighten, to purify, and to elevate man's spirit, that it may be able more abundantly to receive, and more perfectly to reflect the glory of God; and if the manifestation of God's own Son in the likeness of man was the only means by which that exaltation and perfection of man's nature could be attained, and therefore the one great subject of prophecy, then, how that noble picture of man, made from the first in the image and likeness of God, must have helped the prophets to rise to the height of their great argument; how that humbling example of man's weakness and fall, and that cheering promise of deliverance, must have supplied a store of quickening and inspiring thoughts to those who from age to age turned back to ponder over those first grand outlines of primeval story!

Here surely is a consistency and a moral

harmony between the intended subject of prophecy and the training of the prophet's mind; here is a preparation for such views of his own nature and relation to God, of his present needs and future destiny, as must have made him an intelligent, willing, and faithful interpreter of every new promise that seemed to point onward to the coming day of salvation.

LECTURE VII.

PREACHED ON ADVENT SUNDAY, 1872.



Abraham beholding the Day of Christ.

VII.

Abraham beholding the Day of Christ.

‘ By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord ; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son ; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies : and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice.’—GEN. xxii. 16–18.

WHAT was the purpose of the Divine command to Abraham, to offer up his son as a burnt-offering?

It could not be to prove his faith to God, who knoweth the hearts of all men ; nor simply to confirm the obedience and personal righteousness of one who had been so long the tried and faithful servant of the Lord ; nor yet that his example might serve for the instruction of after ages.

We must find some greater and more

adequate cause for subjecting the aged father to such an ordeal, before we can fully answer those who assert that the command was arbitrary, cruel, and unjust, and therefore never came from God.

Our Saviour's words point to the right interpretation, declaring first the motive of Abraham's willing obedience, and then its reward: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day,'—he was full of a joyful and exulting hope¹ that he should see the coming of the promised Deliverer,—'and he saw it, and was glad;' that is, in his lifetime he saw the day of Christ.

The whole narrative in St. John, the objection of the Jews, 'Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?' and our Lord's answer, 'Before Abraham was, I am,'—show that His words must be understood in their plain natural sense,—not that the patriarch's spirit long after death looked forth from its resting-place upon Christ's advent in the flesh, but that he saw it in his own lifetime upon earth,—saw it therefore as things far off are seen, by the prophet's eye.

¹ This seems to be the meaning of the word *ἡγαλλιάσατο*.

And it is as a prophet that I desire to set Abraham now before you. It is his true character, declared expressly in the Divine warning to Abimelech : ‘He is a prophet, and shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live,’ recognised in other parts of Scripture, and exhibited in his whole life.

The signs of a prophet were all wrought in him. The very phrases by which the later prophets describe their special communion with God are taken from his history. He is the first of whom it is said, ‘The Lord appeared unto him ;’ or, ‘The word of the Lord came unto him.’

And whether we look at the abundance of the revelations made to him, or at their infinite importance to mankind, there is not among all the prophets a greater than Abraham.

This special character of the patriarch is apt to be overlooked in the manifold splendour of his actions ; and thus the true significance of his life, especially of its crowning trial, is often misunderstood.

For if that trial was intended to prepare the

way for a grand prophetic revelation of the day of Christ, it is not likely that the moral fitness of the means employed could be discerned by those who either deny the possibility of a revelation from God, or disregard its influence in this case of Abraham.

I shall endeavour therefore to illustrate the argument proposed in former lectures, by examining the moral conditions of the Divine revelation made to Abraham on Mount Moriah.

The promises then renewed and so solemnly attested, are in fact the foundation of all subsequent prophecy. In them therefore we may hope to test fairly the principle already laid down, that the supernatural element in prophecy combines harmoniously with the natural faculties and moral sentiments of the prophet.

Let us try to trace this principle, first, in the preparatory discipline of Abraham's life, and then in the final revelation, in which he saw the day of Christ.

His preparation was life-long. We cannot exclude from it the influence of yet earlier revelation; for he could not have been ready to obey God's first call, had he not been already

imbued with those primary truths which we have traced in the religion of the elder world.

They are *1st*, the belief in a living God, who holds communion with His creatures; *2dly*, the consciousness of a spiritual nature made in God's image, but subject to temptation, sin, and suffering; and *lastly*, that promise of deliverance through the seed of the woman, which however dimly understood, had yet a real influence in keeping alive the religious principles of faith and hope.

That promise was too congenial to man's wants to die out of remembrance; rather it gave birth to strong, and impatient hopes. We trace it in the first mother's joyful cry: 'I have gotten a man from Jehovah.' Again, in the name which she gave to Seth: 'For God,' said she, 'hath appointed me another seed.'

We trace it in Lamech's hope to find rest from the weary curse, when he gazed upon his new-born son, and said, 'This same shall comfort us.' But so far we hear only imperfect echoes of God's promise in the eager but uncertain tones of human hope. The first re-

newal of Divine revelation is made to Noah, and the prophecy concerning his sons is the earliest intimation of God's purpose to set apart one chosen race as the channel of blessing to the world.

So much Abraham may have learnt by tradition of God and of His promises ; and his knowledge, however imperfect, must all have pointed in the same direction,—to the promise given to our first parents, and to the hope which it inspired of a coming Deliverer from sin and death.

But it is in Abraham's personal experience of communion with God that we find his special preparation ; and the more closely we examine the record of his life, the more apparent is the Divine purpose of fitting him to receive and hand down the promise of a great spiritual blessing, to be conveyed to the world through his seed.

The order and the nature of the many revelations made to him, illustrate the characteristic principle of Hebrew prophecy, that natural and spiritual blessings, temporal and eternal promises, are so combined, that the

prophet's eye may pass with growing insight from outward signs to things signified, and through the veil of the present look on to things as yet far off.

This character is clearly seen in the threefold promise made to Abraham when called to leave his home and kindred.

The first, the promise of a land that God will show him, requires and receives an immediate fulfilment.

At his first resting-place in the valley of Shechem, 'Jehovah appeared unto Abraham, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land.'

Thus God, in performing His first promise to show him the land, continues and extends it, combining with it a second, the promise of a seed that shall become a great nation.

This reward of Abraham's first act of obedience comes with a further demand upon his faith, and a more distinct manifestation of the God whom he has trusted; and the effect is marked by a new act of worship: 'Here builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.'

From this time the patriarch's faith finds

its chief trial in the promise of the seed ; while the land, which has been already shown to him, serves rather as a pledge and earnest of God's faithfulness.

When for instance Lot chooses the best portion of that land, Abraham is assured that it shall all be given to him and to his seed for ever ; and to strengthen his faith in the promise that that seed shall be as the dust of the earth, he is bidden to take possession as it were of the land by walking through it in the length and in the breadth thereof.

Time goes on. Abraham is successful in war ; is blessed by Melchizedek, and refuses all share in the rescued spoil of Sodom. The word of the Lord comes to encourage him : God Himself will be his shield and his exceeding great reward.

Then his eager longing breaks forth : ' Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless ? to me Thou hast given no seed.' Thereupon the promise is more clearly defined : no adopted son, but a child of his own, shall be the heir, and his seed shall be as the stars of heaven.

It was a hard trial of faith; but Abraham believed God, 'and it was counted unto him for righteousness.'

There follows a distinct revelation of the time and manner in which the seed, having become a great nation, shall gain possession of the promised land: and so again we see an illustration of the principle, that the strengthening of faith by trial is God's mode of preparing man for fuller revelation, and that promises fulfilled become the foundation of greater promises to be believed.

But the hope thus kept alive is still to be long deferred: though the union with Hagar seems for a time to satisfy it, God's purpose may not be so forestalled by man's impatience.

Abraham's faith must grow step by step. Having grasped the promise of a great nation, it must rise to the better hope of a seed 'born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

As the time draws nigh, there are new revelations of increasing solemnity and wonder; the promise grows into an everlasting covenant, sealed with the blood of circumcision.

New names are given as pledges, first, of *El-Shaddai's* power to fulfil His word; next, of the multitude of the nations that shall be joined unto the stock of *Abraham*; and lastly, of the honour reserved for *Sarah* as mother of the princely seed.

Yet, with all this, it is hard for the father to resign the loving hopes long fixed on Ishmael; and although we do not hear an outburst of unbelief, but only of joy and wonder, when Abraham falls upon his face and laughs, we do hear the voice of an inward struggle in the passionate cry, 'O that Ishmael might live before Thee!'

But the father's love is re-assured by a blessing upon Ishmael, and fear for his first-born is henceforth lost in joyful hope of the true heir. Only let us not imagine Abraham as already looking off to some far distant generation for the fulfilment of the promise. Nothing would be less natural. His hope was now fixed on Isaac: the wonders of his birth seemed to mark the advent of the great Redeemer.

Surely this must be that seed of the woman which shall bruise the serpent's head?

If both in earlier and in after ages the coming of that seed was looked for with an ardent longing in every household; if (as a living preacher¹ has said) 'each faithful father hoped that some day, while embracing his child, in a sudden rapture of joy and adoration he should recognise in his features the ambassador of heaven;' how much stronger must this hope have been in him to whom the voice of God had said, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;' and again, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called!'

This joyful and exulting hope to see His day our Lord Himself describes in the same remarkable word with which the nearer promise of His birth was welcomed by the holy Virgin: 'My spirit hath rejoiced² in God my Saviour.'

While Isaac is growing up to manhood, Abraham enjoys an interval of great prosperity and peace; but the discipline of life is not yet ended, patience has not had her perfect work, nor faith achieved her greatest victory.

And so 'it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.'

¹ Le Père Hyacinthe.

² See p. 134, note.

In that word *tempt* there is of course no idea of evil suggestion or allurements to sin ; but it is a sign given at the outset to guide us to the purpose of the Divine command, and to warn us against all hasty objections. God is going to prove Abraham's faith by a hard trial, and the trial lies partly in those moral difficulties which seem to make the command so strange. The chief objection has been, in part, well answered by Augustine: 'Abraham could never believe that God would delight in human sacrifices ; but when the Divine command was thundering in his ear, it was a time for obedience, not discussion.' The fuller answer must be sought in the purpose of the trial, and that purpose in its issue.

There we find a renewal of all the promises made to Abraham at his first call ; and we observe that the greatest promise—'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'—has never been expressly repeated until now.

The Divine purpose therefore of the trial is to prepare the prophet's soul for a greater revelation than any he has yet received. His

faith must be drawn out into fuller consciousness before his thoughts can embrace the infinite greatness of this final blessing ; his love must be exalted and purified by a harder sacrifice before his heart can conceive what manner of love God will bestow on man in the fulfilment of His promise.

See how this purpose shines out in every part of the wondrous story : 'Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up for a burnt-offering.'

How the sweet tender names are again and again repeated, piercing and probing the father's heart, and kindling his love into a flame, that he may feel in all its terrible reality the greatness of the sacrifice demanded, and that the whole force of natural affection may be set in array against his faith in God !

The words, 'thine only son,' not only serve to remind Abraham that the whole promise rests on Isaac, that all is staked upon his single life ; but when we find them twice repeated after the trial is over, in an expression literally quoted by St. Paul, and applied to

God, who 'spared not His own Son,' we see that they were meant to be prophetic in themselves, and to prepare the way for prophecy, by making Abraham feel, as none had ever felt before, what it is to give an only son to die.

But how far may we suppose the patriarch himself to have discerned the purpose which we can now trace in this Divine command?

We may try to realize his thoughts by recalling those results of former experience which must now have gathered round to support his soul in this supreme moment of its conflict.

1st. He knew beyond all doubt that it was God's command; he knew, if we may so say, the voice of God. Whatever was the mode of the Divine communication, it had been made so familiar to Abraham in earlier revelations, that he could not now mistake or doubt that it was God who spoke.

2dly. Further, he knew that this God had been faithful to every pledge that He had ever given, and had rewarded every sacrifice that He had ever claimed. Hence came a clear conviction that the great promise now staked on Isaac's life must be fulfilled.

And *lastly*, Abraham had come to see in Isaac one born out of nature's course, that in him the ancient promise of victory over sin and death might be fulfilled.

If God now claimed the life so wonderfully given, should Abraham doubt His justice or His love because a veil of unsolved mystery hung around them?

Already he had learned in Ishmael that the yearnings of nature must yield to the nobler love of God's gracious will to bless mankind in Isaac.

Does such a view of Abraham's mind detract from the sublimity of his faith? No, it was nothing but that sublime faith in God's goodness and truth that opened the door of hope, and let in light upon the path which else had been hidden in darkness and despair.

The certainty that the promise resting on Isaac could not fail, left open two alternatives: either Isaac must be given back alive, or his death would bring in at once the promised blessing of the world.

The New Testament bears witness that both these thoughts were in Abraham's mind. Our

Lord points to the latter, when He says that Abraham rejoiced to see His day; and as to the former, besides the well-known statement of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Abraham accounted that God was able to raise up his son even from the dead, in his Epistle to the Romans St. Paul, with a fine and profound penetration, sees the power which raises the dead to life foreshadowed already in the promise of Isaac's birth, and declares that He whom Abraham then believed was 'the God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.'

Thus then in Abraham's words to his servants: 'I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you;' and in his answer to Isaac: 'My son, God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt-offering,'—we discern something more than unconscious prophecy, even a real hope that in some mysterious way, he knew not how, his offering should not end in death; but that death itself, if so it must be, should be the entrance to a new life of blessing.

And so the sacrifice goes on. I do not

touch upon the outward scene, told as it is in words of inimitable beauty, which must not be altered and need not be repeated. It is enough that the sacrifice, so far as it lies in the will of the father and of his son, is complete: 'By faith Abraham has offered up Isaac;' and the human heart has shown that it is capable, by God's grace, of feeling and realizing the mighty power of self-sacrificing love.

Is not this then the time for a glorious revelation? Is it not to such a man as this, and at such a moment, when his heart, still bleeding from the open wounds of love, is all a-glow with gratitude and joy, that God may have been pleased to give the first prophetic glimpse of that Divine and heavenly love, 'wherewith He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'?¹

I know not why we should hesitate to affirm, with the greatest interpreters of Scrip-

¹ Compare Warburton's *Divine Legation*, Book vi. sec. 6, and Graves *On the Pentateuch*, p. 300.

ture in all ages, that God, seeking a fit occasion to confirm by an oath the first promise made to mankind, condescended in His trial of Abraham to enter into a generous rivalry with man;¹ that He chose the sublimest act of which the human heart was capable, to shadow forth His own surpassing love in the gift of His Son, and thus preached the gospel before unto Abraham; and that the patriarch now knew that in his person God was foreshadowing the great truth of future redemption; knew that of his seed in after ages should be born that Christ who should be in truth what Isaac had been in figure, both the sacrifice for the sins of the world, and also 'the resurrection and the life.'

¹ Origen.

LECTURE VIII.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 2^d FEBRUARY 1873.



Moses the Christ-like mediator.

VIII.

Moses the Christ-like mediator.

‘The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto Him ye shall hearken.’—DEUT. xviii. 15.

IN the history of Abraham and the patriarchs, Divine revelation takes the form of promise rather than of prophecy. It is God speaking in His own name, and declaring His own purposes ; not man interpreting to his fellow-man what he has previously heard from God.

This the proper office and work of the prophet begins with Moses ; and here modern criticism makes one of its greatest efforts to trace the origin of prophecy to natural causes only.

If that effort fails, it is certainly from no

want of able and learned advocacy. We cannot read the pages in which the great critic of Jewish history, Ewald, describes the character and work of Moses without feeling that we gain a fuller, and in some respects truer, idea of the great Lawgiver and Prophet; but only in some respects truer, because in this picture the man appears invested with a greatness that is in part divine; and Moses stands transfigured in a glory which is made more dazzling because its true source is hidden from our sight.

My first endeavour therefore must be to show that nothing less than a Divine and supernatural power made Moses so great a prophet as he was.

Looking first at the influences by which his character was formed in youth and early manhood, we can hardly doubt that his preservation in infancy, though in no sense miraculous, must have impressed him afterwards with the feeling that a Divine providence had preserved him for some great purpose. What that purpose was he must have gathered from the records of the promise made to Abraham, that

after 400 years of bondage in a strange land God would deliver His people.

The first attempt which Moses made to fulfil this purpose is most instructive, though sceptical critics, not without reason, pass it over very lightly.

Let us look at the acknowledged facts. Moses himself was in the fresh prime and vigour of life, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, conspicuous by his position at the court of Pharaoh, and commended to his countrymen by his willing sacrifice of all worldly advantages for their sake.

‘It is easy to understand,’ writes Ewald, ‘how sympathy with the great and wide-spread suffering of his own people would act on a mind so powerful and healthy by nature. The extremest resolves of the indignant spirit would seem capable of realization, and the deepest powers of life be roused into an astonishing energy.’

It is agreed also that there was still in Israel a living memory of their ancient religion, so simple and sublime in comparison with the superstitions of Egypt; and still a tradition of

the glory of the patriarchs, and of God's promises entailed on their descendants.

Very naturally, therefore, Moses 'supposed that they would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.'

So complete was the failure, that Moses was forced to flee in haste lest his own countrymen should denounce him as a murderer.

Now contrast this ignominious failure with the wonderful success of his later enterprise, and what is the explanation?

There is none in the human conditions. The fire of patriotism, the indignation roused by the sight of oppression, the hope inspired by ancient promises, the assurance of a righteous cause,—these and all other motives that could kindle man's courage and nerve man's arm were combined in that earlier adventure with the full energy and unbroken confidence of youth.

Why were they unavailing then? What was wanting to a success like that which was afterwards achieved?

One cause of the difference is apparent, and

only one,—the want of the Divine commission, and the power which it imparted.

It is indeed admitted, that the subsequent greatness of Moses rests all upon the fact, that in the solitude of Sinai he had become a prophet of the Lord; but how that all-important change was effected, and what was its essential nature, are points which the critic labours in vain to explain, without acknowledging the direct action of a supernatural power.

He tells us that ‘some power must exist in prophecy as its permanent element, which determines its particular life;’ that this power is ‘the impulse of religion to reveal her own truth;’ that ‘no religion is possible without a God;’ that ‘the nature of religion depends solely on the conception which man forms of his God;’ that ‘this conception may be infinitely various;’ but that ‘only where there is already a living notion of the true God can the prophet become the preacher of a true religion.’ We need not discuss these harmless truisms; but when we ask whence this living notion of the true God first comes, we are told that ‘we must recognise in the prophet one of the most

wonderful primal faculties of the soul, potentially diffused through the whole human race, but revealed in especial strength, truth, and persistence in the history of Israel only.'

Now, whatever be the exact nature of this supposed faculty, which the author does not explain, we must still ask, Does it create for itself the truth which it perceives? Is it a sort of spiritual eye that forms as well as sees imaginary pictures? or an ear of the soul that hears nothing but the sound itself has made? and if it has not this power to create 'a living notion of the true God,' whence does it receive that notion, and why in Israel only, if the faculty itself be universally diffused?

In one passage the author to whom I refer seems to grant all that we could desire: 'As the spirit of every true prophet begins with beholding the Divine light, and being absorbed into the mind and will of God, so Moses, according to the profound truth of the narrative, suddenly in the midst of life's repose beholds a mighty fire of God, and being thereby born anew, is urged on by Divine power to a fresh course. . . .

‘The bush in the desolate waste suddenly becomes to the simple shepherd a burning shrine, out of whose brightness the angel of God speaks to him.’

Who would suppose, in listening to so eloquent and powerful a comment upon the sacred story, that the author means by its ‘profound truth’ only its ideal and not its actual and historic truth; and that even this ideal truth it owes not to Moses, but to some unknown writer among the later prophets, who desired to adapt ‘the great memories of the Mosaic age to the wants of his contemporaries;’ ‘to glorify in graceful and animated descriptions the prophetic truths which had attained to so great an elevation in his own age;’ and ‘to awaken faith in Moses as the great hero, who had himself proved that the highest faith is that in Jehovah, this being a requirement of that prophetic age, and a chief object with the narrator’?

Such is the great triumph of modern criticism, and such the result of an elaborate attempt to exalt the power of human genius in the prophet, to the exclusion of the Spirit of God.

Of Moses, concerning whom such glorious things were spoken as the author of all that was true and great in Israel, there is left to us only an imaginary picture, in which fragments of genuine history and a mass of traditions are remodelled and embellished, to illustrate the ideas of a later age, and to support the credit of its so-called prophets.

For what can we think of those prophets, if, instead of founding their faith (as most of us in our simplicity have supposed) upon the sure records of earlier revelations, and on personal experience of like revelations made to themselves, we find them refashioning the history of the first great prophet into a spurious illustration of religious ideas, which had grown up in their own age, we know not how or whence?

Instead of the later prophets drinking their first draughts of living water from the pure fountains of primitive revelation, the stream of religious truth is made to flow backward, and we know no longer where to look for its genuine source.

There is another result not less strange.

The history of Moses in its general outlines is still unquestioned ; and those outlines are perfectly consistent and intelligible, if the disputed records of Divine interposition and supernatural agency are literally true ; but absolutely unintelligible, if these are regarded as ideal embellishments of a later date.

If there was no actual manifestation of Jehovah to Moses at the bush,—if the command to return to Egypt,—if the promises and signs of supernatural aid by which his doubts and fears were removed, are not real matters of fact, but ideas reflected back upon the history from later times, then that history becomes far more incredible than any number of miracles could make it.

By what motive can we then explain the conduct of Moses ? Why should the man of eighty years return to challenge the enemies from whom the young man fled in terror ? Why suddenly break up a peaceful home, to sacrifice himself for a people who had scornfully rejected him ? Why renew that dangerous enterprise, when the fervour of youth had

been replaced by an excessive distrust of his own fitness?

In the circumstances of Moses at this time there was everything to hinder and nothing to encourage his great undertaking; and nothing less than an actual call from God, appealing with overpowering evidence to the senses as well as to the soul, can render this portion of the narrative consistent or credible.

Assuming then the reality of this Divine call, we may proceed to consider how it harmonizes with the moral condition of the prophet.

We can see now how the very circumstances which must have kept him back from such an enterprise, if dependent upon human power, helped to fit him for a work in which all hope of success must rest on God.

We see how the forty years, seemingly wasted in the obscure and simple life of a shepherd in Midian, served as a long training in patience and humility to correct the presumptuous confidence and hasty zeal of youth.

We see how the Divine call adapts itself to his existing knowledge by speaking in the name of the God of his fathers, and rekindling

the memory of the ancient promises which had fired his youthful imagination with such lofty hopes; and how his previous faith thus strengthened is at once subjected to further trial by the very promise given to encourage him: 'Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.'

How could this promise be a token at all, except to one who already believed in the sure fulfilment of God's word? But to one who did so believe, how beautifully does this token combine the certainty of the ancient promise, that God would bring forth His people from the house of bondage, with the new impulse just given to faith, 'Ye shall serve God upon this mountain,' in the very place whereon thou standest, and which My presence has made holy ground to thee!

It is an ancient and well-grounded belief, that He who thus spake out of the midst of the burning bush, and who at other times communed with Moses face to face, as a man talketh to

his friend, was no other than the Son, who was afterwards to be found in fashion as a man.

If that belief be accepted, it sheds a very interesting light upon the origin of that resemblance between Christ and Moses which our text implies.

For then not only in the visible light which shone upon the face of Moses when he came down from talking with Jehovah on the mount, but also in the spiritual brightness of his soul we may see a reflection of the Divine glory, a beginning of that moral transfiguration of which St. Paul speaks in this same connection with the brightness of Moses' face : ' We all, with open face reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.'¹

And even without insisting on this view of the special manifestations of God vouchsafed to Moses, we may certainly discern in him the growth of a Christlike character.

I do not mean the symbolical resemblance of office and work, which makes the great redeemer, lawgiver, and prophet of Israel so

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

remarkable a type of that greater One whom he foretold, but an actual conformity of character, a true moral and spiritual likeness.

You may see it in the wonderful meekness which marks the ripened age of Moses, and forms so strong a contrast to his fiery youth, —you may see it in that deep humility and utter surrender of himself to God, which cast out every thought of personal ambition or jealous rivalry, and made him wish that all God's people might be prophets, and 'that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them all.' But above all, you may see this likeness in that love of his brethren which marked out Moses as a true forerunner of the great Mediator and Intercessor.

Remember how often he stands before the Lord to intercede for others' sins: for Aáron, for Miriam, for all Israel once and again, at Sinai and at Kadesh, the fervent prayer of the righteous man goes up, and God pardons according to His servant's word.

We have only time to look at the one most striking instance, which is in fact the greatest trial of Moses' faithfulness, corresponding to

the temptation of Abraham, and designed like that to draw out the full strength of self-sacrificing love, and so to reveal to the prophet what that Christlike spirit of intercession that was in him did signify.

The sin of the people in worshipping the golden calf was first made known to Moses while yet on the mount by the Lord Himself: 'Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.'

Never was the strength and purity of self-denying love tried by so large a promise, except when our Lord Himself was tempted with the offer of 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.'

If Moses would be content to let the people perish in their sin, as they had deserved, he should himself become, like Abraham, 'heir of the world,' sole ancestor of God's chosen people, and father of the promised seed.

But he who, long before God called him to deliver Israel, had 'looked with a great compassion upon his down-trodden people,' and had

refused the treasures and honours of Egypt to cast in his lot with them,—he who had since dared and done so much in their cause, and had led them out in safety at last, had come to love them far too well to think of himself in comparison with them.

His own heart taught him how to plead for them with God, by remembrance of past mercies bestowed on them; and when he had thus gained a respite, and had gone down and rebuked the people, and taken just vengeance upon the chief sinners, he went up again into the mount, saying, ‘Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.’

Then he returned unto the Lord and said, ‘Oh! this people have sinned a great sin: now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin’—; yet there is no answer, but silence; and then, after a moment’s pause, Moses cannot restrain the fulness of his love, but breaks forth again—

‘And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.’

And what shall we say of such a prayer? Shall we call it a sudden, rash, and somewhat presumptuous outburst of passionate entreaty,

as many a formal dogmatist, and many a timorous self-absorbed soul that can see nothing in the world so precious as its own salvation, would persuade us?

Or shall we recognise it as the sublimest prayer that merely human lips have ever uttered, save once again when St. Paul's great soul was filled with the like overmastering all-forgetting love for the same people Israel; and he too, not hastily, but with a solemn invocation of the Holy Ghost to witness his sincerity, wrote down the words, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh'?¹

If it be reserved 'for such a man as Moses or St. Paul to realize and dare to utter his readiness to be wholly sacrificed,'²—to give his own life, yea, his very soul, for the sake of those whom God has entrusted to his love,—yet it cannot be forbidden to us to recognise in such an utterance the true spirit of the Mediator and Redeemer, even of Him who said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that

¹ Rom. ix. 3.

² *The Speaker's Commentary*, Ex. xxxii. 32.

he lay down his life for his friends,' and on the morrow laid down His life for His enemies.

The offering which Moses made of his own soul was not accepted; but the Lord's answer was, 'Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.'

If then thus at the very moment when Moses most deeply feels man's need of One who can make an atonement for his sin, he is taught by God's answer that 'No man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him, for it cost more to redeem their souls,' may we not well believe that he was thus both prepared and permitted to attain a deeper insight than before into the counsels of the Divine love and mercy?

Would it not be a fit reward for a life of brave and patient endurance, of toil and suffering borne for others, not wholly in vain, and yet not of full avail, that he should be permitted to look beyond that long course of sin and repentance, of judgment and of mercies through which he prophesied that Israel must pass, and to see far off the form of One to be raised up from among His brethren, like unto

himself, but greater and worthier, Who should not only bring salvation unto Israel, but also fulfil that greater promise made to Moses himself: 'As I live, saith the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with my glory'?

As then in the case of Abraham I tried to show that the light in which he saw the day of Christ was a light from heaven, yet tempered and coloured by the medium through which it passed of a human father's love, so that the first vision of the sacrifice of the Son of God was granted to one prepared to feel the greatness of that unspeakable gift, and to exhibit in his own deed a visible prophecy of that heavenly Father's love who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all: so now in the next great stage of prophecy we find in the personal history and character of Moses a likeness to Him of whom he testified.

And we are thus led to discern a principle which seems to run throughout all prophecy, linking its Divine and human elements together in truest harmony. And the principle is this, that *when God began to make choice of fit persons to be the heralds and precursors*

of redemption, He began also to reveal to them with a growing clearness the Person of the Redeemer.

And thus, while each aspect of His Person successively presented to us may take shape and colour partly from the personal character and special experience of the prophet through whom it is revealed, it is no less true that the prophet himself is gradually moulded and fashioned into a likeness of the Divine Ideal set before him.

The image of Christ formed in his soul, partly by direct illumination, partly by the providential course of the manifold influences of human life, becomes to the prophet a part of himself wrought into his very nature, not a mere 'Messianic idea,' but a Christlike spirit and a Christlike life.

LECTURE IX.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 2D MARCH 1873.



The Law in its relation to Prophecy.

I X.

The Law in its relation to Prophecy.

‘Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid.’

—GAL. iii. 21.

THE key to the wonderful history of Israel lies in that Divine purpose of redemption which forms the one great theme of prophecy.

The strange contrast between that rigid exclusiveness which separated the Jews from other people, and their hope of a universal supremacy for their religion and race; the utter disproportion of their political importance and material power to the vast and ever-growing influence of the faith which had its roots in them and in their fathers,—these, and all the other seeming contradictions of the national character and history, lie folded as in their

cause in the Divine choice of one man's seed to be the channel of a universal blessing.

As Abraham founds the race, so Moses forms the people ; and the birth of Isaac was not more marvellous than the birth of that holy nation, which was baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Apart from all visible manifestations of supernatural power which heralded that birth, it is agreed by those who have no faith in such outward miracles, that the age of Moses was glorified by moral and spiritual wonders of surpassing grandeur ; that his whole power as the acknowledged leader, ruler, and lawgiver of Israel lay in that Divine word to which he constantly appealed ; and that 'the example of a people submitting, as Israel did in the crisis of its history, to the sway of religious truths asserted by a prophet in God's name, is unique, and cannot appear too marvellous in our eyes.'¹

And when it is further acknowledged that the people of Israel, in all their varied experience, saw the power of their God directly active, His favour in all their prosperity, His

¹ See Ewald, i. 475.

displeasure in their adversities,—that to them it was not so much the prophet who uttered each Divine truth as God Himself, the personal living God; and that the greatest human heroes, as Moses, ascribed all their wisdom and power to the special gift and calling of Jehovah, and glorified Him as the sole Deliverer of His people.

I am content to rest my faith in the Divine and supernatural origin of the religion and law of Moses upon these acknowledged facts of history, and to ask each unprejudiced mind to draw its own inference from them.

I know that the inference which I feel compelled to draw, is not drawn by some whose historical insight and candour force them to admit the facts.

When they say¹ that ‘God may be regarded as drawing nearer to those who bind themselves to Him by new and better laws,’ or ‘that God felt as a living power by the human soul in knowledge, law, and duty, can henceforth be nearer to such a people,’—I am aware that they view this result as really proceeding

¹ Ewald, *History of Israel*, Book II. Sect. ii. p. 526.

from man, and not from God; they mean, not that the power comes down from God to lift man up, but that man lifts up his own heart to higher and nobler thoughts of God.

But when it is admitted, that 'even in the earliest record' the grandeur of the events on Sinai is apparent; 'that God Himself speaks to the people through Moses, or even by His own voice amid the storm;'¹ and that even this first historian 'conceives and represents the inner and essential truths as external facts, and so could say that on Sinai God Himself came down and proclaimed His laws in His own words,'² we accept this statement not only as based upon the earliest record, and therefore of primary historical authority, but also as in itself more credible, more truly rational, than the view which ascribes so many moral and spiritual wonders to the spontaneous impulses of a people whose whole conduct shows their impotence to originate, and even their slowness to receive, the pure and lofty truths of Moses' teaching.

We may proceed therefore, without further

¹ Ewald, p. 525.

² P. 527.

question of the origin of the great prophet's power, to consider the nature of his work, and especially its influence upon the progress of the Divine revelation; for the giving of the law, like every other great movement in the history of the chosen people, is as closely linked to the past as to the future.

It is indeed an error to say that the great truths proclaimed in the law of Moses had long existed in the whole feeling and aspiration of the Israelites, so that the legislation at Sinai only gave clearness and permanence of form to what was already embodied in the habits of the nation.¹

The tenor of the history points to the contrary conclusion; that as the people became more and more degraded by their bondage, their knowledge of the God of their fathers had become less clear and pure, so that now nothing else but the impulse of a new revelation from God could have kindled into life those great spiritual truths which shone out with so bright and distinct a light upon the age of Moses.

How that light was kindled in Moses' own

¹ Ewald, *History of Israel*, p. 529.

soul, and fostered in him the Christlike character of the prophet and the mediator, we have already seen.

When we turn to his work, we find that under the guidance of the same Divine illumination he ministered, like Christ in this point also, to one nation for the good of all.

Thus two opposite tendencies were combined in the legislation of Moses; it was both exclusive and expansive. Its first and most obvious effect was to mark off and separate the chosen people from all others, and to exhibit in the national life and religion a contrast and rebuke to the vices and idolatries of heathenism. But this exclusive tendency, which is so strongly marked in the ceremonial law, was to be temporary and transient as means to an end.

The expansive tendency to prepare the way for that great salvation in which all nations should be blessed, is to be traced in the great fundamental truths which underlie the whole dispensation, and concentrate their strength in the moral law. It is in this latter tendency that we find the grand and final purpose of the

law, and see how the special covenant with Israel enfolded, cherished, and preserved the promise of the universal blessing.

This general aim of the law is nowhere more clearly or comprehensively stated than in that remarkable passage of the 19th chapter of Exodus, where God sends Moses to make the first proposal of His covenant to Israel: 'Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.'

This passage sets before us, first, the character in which God proposes His covenant, namely, as the Deliverer of His people; and then the peculiar relation into which Israel is brought, both towards God and towards man, as a kingdom of priests.

Our first point then is, that the law of

Moses is based upon a revelation of God as the Deliverer and Redeemer of His people: 'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, ye shall be unto me a peculiar people.'

Plain as the statement is, and significant as God's own first proposal of His covenant, if the passage stood alone we might hesitate to build upon it any important general conclusion. But I need hardly remind you, that in the opening words of the law itself as given on Sinai, God again speaks as the Deliverer, and brings the redemption of Israel into the closest and most striking connection with His claim to an undivided and spiritual worship: 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.'

Now this reference to the deliverance from Egypt, and the promise added to the fifth commandment, 'Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,' are

often cited as proofs that the law is based on a narrow and exclusive idea of Jehovah as a merely national and local Deity; and we are told that it was a question even in the rabbinical schools, why Jehovah did not here proclaim Himself rather as 'the Creator of heaven and earth.'¹

We answer, that the progress and continuity of the Divine revelation demanded at this stage something more than a re-statement of God's claim to universal obedience as Creator of the world.

It is the identity of the God who delivers from Egyptian bondage, and blesses His obedient people in the land of promise, with the one living and true God, the eternal self-existent Jehovah. This is the great fundamental truth by which the law of Moses is linked in indissoluble harmony with God's earlier and later dispensations, and by virtue of which, each temporal deliverance is made the pledge of a spiritual redemption, and Israel's history becomes the shining pathway upon which the ancient promise, that in Abraham's seed all

¹ *Speaker's Commentary*, Ex. xx. 2.

nations shall be blessed, moves onward to its glorious end.

Again, the law prepared the way for the gospel of grace, because it rested on a new and fuller revelation of God's moral nature in its twofold aspect of holiness and love. Already we see this in the Decalogue, where He who visits the sins of the fathers in temporal chastisements upon their children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, shows mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Him, and keep His commandments.

But it is in a subsequent revelation of God's name that this union of justice and mercy is most strikingly presented.

Moses had seen as much of the essential glory of the Godhead as man could see and live; but a richer reward was in store for the faithful mediator, who could pray to be blotted out of the book of life, if the sin of His people might not otherwise be forgiven.

To such a soul more could be revealed than the heart of man had yet conceived of the greatness of Divine love; to him therefore

God says, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.'

And so the Lord descended on the mount, the cloud still veiling the devouring fire of His glory, but the voice proclaiming that wonderful name of holy love, 'Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.'¹

'Nothing can be more certain' (we are told by a critic who is at other times sufficiently sceptical), 'than that these sublime words are derived from the age of Moses, and from that man of God himself.'²

And any one who will follow up the history of those words in the later books of Scripture, and observe how they recur again and again as titles of the gracious and merciful God, in the Psalms and in the prophets, in Joel's call to repentance, in Jonah's murmuring, in Hezekiah's proclamation of the Passover, in Nehemiah's public renewal of the covenant, and in

¹ Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

² Ewald, p. 545.

other passages,¹—will feel how profoundly that revelation of Divine love was impressed upon the heart of the true Israelite, and how the law and the covenant of Moses not only served to separate the chosen race by outward barriers, and so to guard the sacred deposit of promises inherited from the fathers, but also enlarged and enriched that ancient inheritance by new and glorious revelations of God as the mighty and the merciful Redeemer.

It is not too much to say that the teaching of the Pentateuch revealed beforehand that which the whole history of Israel afterwards displayed,—that God is by His very nature the Deliverer of His people, and that for His own name's sake He must and will perform every promise of blessing that He has ever bestowed upon mankind.

The sins of the fathers might turn to their own destruction, or even be visited upon their children; one stubborn generation might perish in the wilderness, another be led into captivity at Babylon, and a third reject and

¹ Ps. lxxxvi. 15; Joel ii. 13; Jonah iv. 2; 2 Chron. xxx. 9; Neh. ix. 17.

slay the Divine Redeemer Himself;—but the word of the Lord to one who like Abraham loved Him and kept His commandments, must stand fast for a thousand generations and for ever: ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’

When we turn to the other side of the covenant, and observe the peculiar position in which it sets the chosen people, we see that here also, under the rigid forms of national exclusiveness, a grand spiritual truth is enshrined.

The separation of Israel from the surrounding nations is the consecration of a chosen people to the priesthood of the world. First, in the promise, ‘Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine,’—the reason assigned for Israel’s call is very remarkable.

It asserts the important truth, that God’s choice of the Israelites was not constrained by the want of other nations whom He might have called to His service, and implies that those other nations, though not so called, were still the objects of God’s care.

The book of Deuteronomy enforces these thoughts frequently and fully. 'The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.'¹

'Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.'²

The call of Israel being thus based on no peculiar excellence or merit, could not be made for Israel's sake alone; rather it must be in its purpose as wide and universal as the promise to the fathers upon which it rested; it must be designed ultimately to bring in all nations under the blessing of Him who is Lord of all.

And in beautiful harmony with this design, the remembrance of God's special mercy to Israel is often urged as a motive to kindness and compassion to the sojourner of alien race. 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye

¹ Deut. vii. 7.

² Deut. x. 14, 15.

know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.’¹ ‘The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.’²

The world-wide purpose of Israel’s election is further set forth in the remarkable expression, ‘a kingdom of priests.’

The Jews rightly understood this as applying to every true member of the royal and priestly race. All were to be, in the words of their ancient Targum, ‘crowned kings and ministering priests.’

But the priest is ever one who draws near to God not for himself alone; and this universal priesthood of Israel must therefore mean, what the enlightened spirits of the prophets so clearly discerned, ‘that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister.’

Thus in Isaiah lxvi., God says of the dispersion of Israel: ‘I will send those that escape of them unto the nations—to the isles afar off—that have not heard my fame, neither

¹ Ex. xxiii. 9.

² Lev. xix. 34.

have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.'

St. Paul therefore still speaks in the ancient spirit of the royal priesthood when he calls himself the minister, the priestly 'minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.'¹

And great and glorious as the office thus bestowed on Israel was, it went not beyond the scope of the ancient promise that Abraham should be the father of many nations, and kings should come out of him.

That promise could not have its completion in the one nation which sprang from Sarah's only son. The Gentiles, expressly referred to in the original (Goyim), must be grafted into the chosen stock, and become Abraham's children by adoption; and in the spiritual sonship thus

¹ Rom. xv. 16.

implied, Israel as the first-born must be both priest and king.

But further, this 'kingdom of priests' must also of necessity be 'a holy nation.'

Their outward sanctification is marked at the giving of the law by rites precisely similar to those afterwards observed in the consecration of Aaron and his sons.

The three days of purification; the washing of garments; the building of the altar and twelve pillars, according to the number of the tribes; the sacrifices offered by Moses; the blood sprinkled first upon the altar to signify the surrender of life to God, and then upon the people to show the restoration of that life renewed by God's grace and bound to His service,—all marked the covenant thus made as the consecration of a kingdom of priests.¹

But corresponding to this outward consecration, there must be also an inward purity; and in this essential condition Israel from the first fell short of its high calling.

Could they have risen up at once to the divine standard of holy obedience, all should

¹ Ex. xix. 10 and xxiv. 4-8.

have been priests and kings, even as Moses would have had them all to be prophets of the Lord.

But instead of mediating for other nations with Jehovah, they needed a mediator for themselves. Conscious of their own unfitness to stand before the holy God, they say to Moses: 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'¹

The request was granted, and all the sacred duties and dignities to which Israel was called were concentrated for the time in the person of Moses. He alone was the priest as well as the prophet and ruler of God's people.

And yet after this seeming rejection, followed that solemn consecration of the whole people, as if to show that no present unworthiness could hinder God's design in calling them to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

Time warns me to pursue the subject no further, and enough has perhaps been said to indicate the general relation of the great work of Moses to earlier and latter revelations; enough to show us how eternal truths were

¹ Ex. xx. 19.

guarded by temporary restrictions, and how universal promises were enshrined in national hopes, thence to be drawn forth again in after ages in all their fulness of blessing. We have seen that the law announced amid the thunders of Sinai was no narrow and exclusive code, no mere republication of truths revealed in former ages, but made a distinct and most important addition to the revelation of Jehovah as a Redeemer mighty to save, and as a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.

We have seen that, in separating Israel from all other nations, God at the same time called them to be the ministers and heralds of salvation to the world; and finally, that in the ideal perfection set before them at the commencement of their national life, but neither then nor afterwards realized therein, He laid the living and fruitful seed of many a noble aspiration, the germ of many a glowing prophecy of that spiritual kingdom in which the true Israelites should rise to the dignity of their high calling, and all should be made 'kings and priests unto God.'

LECTURE X.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY 1874.



A King the Prophet of Christ's Kingdom.

X.

A King the Prophet of Christ's Kingdom.

‘ Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.’—Ps. ii. 6.

I HAVE tried to show, in former lectures, that when God began to make choice of fit persons to be the precursors and heralds of our redemption, He began also to reveal to them, with growing clearness, the personal image of the Redeemer; so that while each aspect of His person took something of its shape and colour from the mental and moral nature of the prophet through whom it was revealed, the prophet himself was gradually moulded and fashioned into a likeness of the Divine Ideal set before him.

Thus in the great trial of Abraham's faith we saw an image, so bright and clear as to

be in fact a visible prophecy, of that true sacrifice of Divine love, in which the heavenly Father spared not His only Son, His well-beloved, but freely gave Him up for us all.

In Moses we recognised the spirit of a true mediator, willing to be himself blotted out from God's book of life for the salvation of his people, and so permitted to behold, far off, the form of One rising up from among His brethren, like unto himself, but worthy as well as willing to make His soul an offering for sin. More generally in the history of the children of Israel we saw an acted prophecy, foreshadowing the redemption of all nations from a worse than Egypt's bondage: we saw also that God's design to make them ministers and heralds of salvation to the world, included from the first a special consecration of the whole people—to be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. Their law, their history, their national character, must all combine to make them fit guardians of the promise, and sure though not willing witnesses of its fulfilment. Passing onward to the rise of the Hebrew monarchy, I shall try to trace

the same principles there, and show that the prophetic representation of the promised Saviour as a King arose—as it would most naturally rise—in an age of kingly rule, and in men of kingly hearts.

Earlier intimations may be found of the great idea which was to be prefigured in the history of the chosen people—the idea of the kingdom of God.

The presages of future royalty may be discerned in the promise ‘that Sarah shall be a mother of nations, and kings of people shall come out of her;’ in Jacob’s dying prophecy of the Sceptre and the Lawgiver that ‘shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come;’ or in Balaam’s vision of the Star of Jacob and the Sceptre of Israel.

But I shall not dwell on these transient gleams of early prophecy, bright points though they be in the long line of light that reaches from the first page of revelation to the last. I shall rather try to show that in the broad daylight of history, and in living connection with the thoughts and deeds of men, the Hebrew monarchy presents a clear and un-

mistakeable prophecy of a Divine and everlasting kingdom.

We shall have to trace two distinct lines of thought rising in different ages, and gradually growing into one, till both are fully realized in that kingdom which embraces earth and heaven, and links time with eternity.

The first thought is, that God alone is the King of Israel; the second, that David shall not want a man to sit upon his throne for ever.

The former belief is far the more ancient: it was born with the people in their deliverance from Egypt, and became the one enduring foundation of the national polity.

It first finds utterance in Moses' song of triumph on the Red Sea shore: when the Lord shall have brought His ransomed people to the mountain of His inheritance, to the place which He has made for Himself to dwell in—there 'Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever.'¹

We see here the origin of what is called the Hebrew Theocracy. The eternal God is Himself the ruler of the nation: Israel is His people, and He is their King as well as their God.

¹ Ex. xv. 18.

Out of this truth grows the national life, and on it are based morality, religion, and law.

The words heard amid the thunders of Sinai are not only a revelation of the great truths that live for ever in the Divine government of the universe; they are the actual statutes of a kingdom established upon earth,—the laws of Him who comes down from heaven to sit as a King enthroned between the cherubim, and to dwell in the midst of His people.

A strange and incomprehensible mystery!—that the very God of heaven, the Eternal and Invisible, should make His dwelling among men, and occupy the place of a human king.

Yet hardly less wonderful was the second thought which sprang up in a later age,—that in the little state of Israel a King should be born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who should extend His dominion from one end of the earth to the other, and reign as long as the sun and moon endure. To bring this new hope into harmony with the ancient creed that seems so utterly opposed to it,—to reconcile the perpetual reign of David's seed with the exclusive sovereignty

of Jehovah,—is the new task upon which prophecy now enters.

The first advance is clearly marked when the title ‘Messiah,’ hitherto applied only to ‘the Priest that is anointed,’ is transferred to the promised King.

Hannah is the first that so uses it, in her song of thanksgiving: ‘The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth: He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His Anointed.’¹

We hear a clear echo of these words in the hymn of Zacharias: ‘The Lord hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David: as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began.’²

But even apart from this application of the prophecy to Christ, it is remarkable in its original reference to the rise of kingly government in Israel. For observe how carefully the great truth of God’s sole sovereignty is guarded in this first announcement of an earthly king. It is still Jehovah that shall

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 10.

² Luke i. 69, 70.

judge the ends of the earth: He shall give strength to the rising monarchy; He shall anoint, and, in anointing, choose and consecrate the human king as His viceroy upon earth.

Whether we consider the time of this prediction, or the person who uttered it,—Hannah, the pious mother of the future king-maker,—we see that prophecy is here in harmony with its age; not merely following its tendencies, but guiding and leading on its great events, ushering in the designs of Providence by so defining the character of the earthly kingdom that it might not overshadow the glory of the heavenly.

The same providential care to guard the Divine prerogative is seen in the rise of the Prophetic Order. Samuel, the chief agent in setting up the new monarchy, is also the most jealous champion of the ancient theocracy.

Whether he rebukes the people who ask for a king to reign over them when the Lord God is their King, or yields at God's command to their request: whether he pours the oil over the head of Saul, and kisses him, saying, 'The Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over

His inheritance:’ or utters his final doom, ‘The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou:’—in all that the prophet says or does there is the same clear assertion of God’s sovereignty, the same fearless use of the right to speak with paramount authority in His name.

The example of Samuel was followed by all the prophets: the mere name of Elijah the Tishbite, of Micaiah the son of Imlah, of Isaiah or Jeremiah, is enough to recall the noblest proofs of fidelity to that ancient truth which made loyalty the handmaid of religion, and saw in each anointed ruler of Israel a representative of the Majesty which is

‘Above that force of temporal power,
Wherein doth lie the fear and dread of kings.’

That a whole nation should thus devote their allegiance to an Invisible King, and accept the declaration of His will as their only law, is a fact unparalleled in history. The keenest of critics is at a loss for words to express his admiration.¹ He compares the establishment of

¹ Ewald, i. p. 572.

the theocracy with such national efforts as the expulsion of the Tarquins or of the sons of Pisistratus, and pronounces it far nobler and bolder. He calls it a Titanic enterprise,—a gigantic effort,—raising the nation into the noblest sphere, and straining its highest moral powers: an effort possible only in a period of spiritual elevation, in which a nation had actual living experience of God as a true Deliverer.

Such a view of the history wants nothing to complete it but a distinct and unequivocal recognition of the source of this national inspiration in that Spirit of God ‘who spake by the prophets.’ For it is not possible to understand either the rise of the theocracy under Moses, or its maintenance through the whole period of the monarchy, without admitting that the prophets were raised up as organs of the Spirit of God, to stand before the rulers and people of Israel to declare the sovereign will of the great King of kings.

We find accordingly that the most striking feature and chief excellence in the character of the man after God’s own heart is this—

that he delights to regard himself as the servant of the Lord, the shepherd of His people, and the minister of His will.

Other qualities helped to make David so fit a type and so eminent a prophet of the Messiah. He had all natural gifts which best become a prince ; in beauty and strength, in daring but deliberate valour, in keen sagacity, in quick resource, in patient endurance, and in generous impulse, he far surpassed his predecessor.

Trained amid hardship and danger, he knew both to do and to suffer, to want and to abound ; persecuted but not forsaken, troubled on every side but not destroyed, he had learned to trust the faithfulness of God's promises, and the sufficiency of His power.

Chosen in early youth, and anointed with the sacred oil, he never sought to hasten or anticipate God's purpose ; but with a chivalrous and touching loyalty preserved to the last his reverence for Saul as the Lord's anointed.

Thus awaiting the call of Providence, and taking no honour unto himself, he came to the throne in the prime of a noble manhood

and in fulness of the Divine right, and proved himself by royal deeds a true king of men,—wise in council, victorious in war, the champion of justice, the saviour of the oppressed, the friend of the righteous, and the father of his people.

Yet the mark of God's special favour is set, not upon these shining virtues, but upon that lowly grace of humility which sheds its soft light above them all. In the height of his glory David never forgets the hand which raised him, but loves to tell of his lowly origin, and how God had brought him to so great honour, and comforted him on every side. He is ever lifting up his eyes to the heavens; his soul is ever waiting upon the Lord, striving to do His will, longing and thirsting and fainting to behold His glory.

Such was David in the uprightness of his heart, before the dark shadow of deadly sin had fallen upon him.

And when we call to mind the image of the youthful shepherd,—so pure and gentle and brave; of the warrior, so fearless for God and for His people, so generous and forgiving

to his bitterest enemy ; or of the monarch, so little in his own sight, so zealous for the honour of God, so just and merciful in his care of God's people,—we look in vain among the kings of Israel, in vain among all the kings of the earth, for any in whom the royal virtues of the man shine out so bright and fair in the heavenly light of God's grace.

Here then was a soul conformed to the ideal of a true king,—a soul already imbued with the noblest virtues, and filled with the holiest aspirations ; a soul therefore fit to be touched with the spark of heavenly fire, ready to be quickened and illumined by the Holy Spirit of prophecy, until amid the kindling glow of thought there should shine forth the image of a king like David himself, but fairer than the children of men, one in whom all gifts and graces of which man is capable should be combined with the perfections that belong to God only.

The growth of this great thought in the royal prophet's mind may be clearly traced. There is a marked difference between psalms which were written before or after the promise

of the Son in whom David's kingdom should be established for ever.

The 24th Psalm, at the bringing up of the Ark, is full of the ancient faith in Jehovah as Israel's King; its theme is God's dominion over the earth, and the saintly character of His subjects. But He wears not yet the likeness of an earthly king. He to whom the everlasting doors lift up their heads is the Lord strong and mighty: 'The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.'

Then there came a time when King David sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about; and in David's grateful heart the desire arose to build a house for God. The pious thought had its reward in a promise upon which all subsequent prophecy of Christ's kingdom was founded: 'It shall come to pass, when thy days are expired, that thou must go with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish His kingdom. . . . I will be His Father, and He shall be my Son; and I will not take my mercy away from Him, as I

took it from him that was before thee: but I will settle Him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever; and His throne shall be established for evermore.’¹

The seed which shall be of David’s sons must be some descendant later than Solomon; and the whole description is such as cannot be applied to a mortal king, or only so far as he is a type of One greater than himself. It points to eternal and spiritual truths prefigured and embodied in the kingdom of David, to be realized in the kingdom of his Son.

Out of this great promise grew the Psalms which show us a King who is at once human and Divine.

In our text God speaks in defiance of His enemies: ‘Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.’ Then He whom Jehovah calls so emphatically ‘My King,’ is heard proclaiming His own title. As God had said of David’s promised seed, ‘I will be His Father, and He shall be my Son;’ so the Son Himself here recalls that promise as the decree which sets Him on His throne: ‘The Lord said unto

¹ 2 Sam. vii. and 1 Chron. xvii.

me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.'

In the 18th Psalm, written at the same period, the magnificent description of Jehovah coming forth from His temple in heaven, riding upon the cherubim and flying upon the wings of the wind to the rescue of His servant, is followed by passages in which David, speaking from past experience of God's saving power, is led on thence to still higher thoughts, and sees in his own victories an earnest of the future conquests of One who could say in a higher sense than he could, 'Thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.'

When the same voice presently adds, 'I will give thanks unto Thee among the heathen,' we know from St. Paul it is the voice of Christ; while we hear again in the close of the psalm an echo of the promise, that God 'will show mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for ever.'

Once more let us look for a few moments at the 110th Psalm, quoted in the New Testament oftener than any other of the ancient Scriptures, —a psalm so universally ascribed to David and interpreted of Christ, that when Jesus appealed to it as an inspired testimony of His Divine Lordship, ‘no man was able to answer Him a word.’

The psalm claims the highest inspiration; it is ‘the oracle of Jehovah.’¹ The prophet hears the Divine voice speaking to One in whom he beholds his Lord, and bidding Him sit at God’s right hand until His enemies be made His footstool.

In the King thus invested with Godlike majesty and power, David recognises the Son who shall sit upon his throne for ever; for from Zion He shall stretch forth the rod of His power, and rule in the midst of His enemies.

His people offer themselves willingly in the day of battle; they go forth in priestly robes, a glittering host, bright, fresh, and countless as the dew of the morning.

¹ Ver. 1. THE LORD said unto my Lord.

The vision of that royal priesthood, and the majestic figure of their King, call up the remembrance of an ancient mystery. On that same holy hill, the righteous king of Salem, the priest of the most high God came forth of old to give his blessing to the patriarch Abraham.

With that thought a new light flashes upon the prophet's spiritual sight. Again he looks upon the King, again he hears the awful voice address Him: 'The Lord sware and will not repent; Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.'

Again he sees the mighty warrior moving on in the strength of the Lord, crushing kings in the day of His wrath, and smiting in sunder the heads over divers nations,—yet not untouched with a feeling of human infirmity, as He stoops amid the weariness and thirst of the conflict to drink of the brook in the way, and so lifting up His head refreshed and strengthened, goes onward conquering and to conquer.

We cannot over-estimate the importance of this psalm; it is the very crown and flower

of David's Messianic prophecies. It embraces the full circle of his spiritual vision, the kingdom, the priesthood, the conquests, and even the sufferings of Christ.

Nowhere does prophecy more distinctly assert or more fully justify its claim to be the living oracle of God. Yet nowhere can we more clearly see that the Divine Spirit works upon the spirit of man not mechanically, not magically, not unnaturally, but in full harmony with his mental and moral nature: enlisting all gifts and faculties in its service, making memory the mother of foresight, and experience the nurse of hope, combining old promises with new revelations, and records of the past with visions of the future, leading the prophet on by subtle associations, even of names and of places, to the interpretation of an ancient type, till it turns the dim and mysterious figure of Melchizedek into a fresh and glowing prophecy of Him in whom the Priest and the King shall be for ever one.

LECTURE XI.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 1ST MARCH 1874.



The Sufferings of Christ foreshadowed in the
Sorrows of the Righteous.

XI.

The Sufferings of Christ foreshadowed in the Sorrows of the Righteous.

‘But Thou hast abhorred and forsaken Thine anointed, and art displeased at him. Thou hast broken the covenant of Thy servant, and cast his crown to the ground.’—Ps. lxxxix. 37, 38.

I HAVE been trying to show that the various aspects in which the one great subject of Messianic prophecy is revealed, are in harmony with the moral nature and mental experience of the individual prophets.

We have thus seen, that Christ in His glory as a King was first beheld by the kingly soul of David.

In the height of his prosperity, and in the still unsullied purity of his early manhood, he received the promise of a son to sit upon his throne for ever.

We have traced the influence of that pro-

mise in some of David's psalms. It was, in fact, the source and fount of all subsequent predictions of Christ's kingdom.

We may see in the last words of the son of Jesse,¹ how he had clung to that promise through all the trials and sorrows of his later years.

His soul seems to gather up its strength at the approach of death; and filled with the spirit of prophecy, he looks onward to the future, and sees One 'who ruleth over men, just, and ruling in the fear of God,' the happiness of whose kingdom is 'as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth,—a morning without clouds, when, from the clear shining after rain, the tender grass springs fresh from the earth.'

And then, looking back upon the promise, David sees that this righteous Ruler is to spring from his house, because God has made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.

Upon this last prophecy of David is based the prayer for Solomon in the 72d Psalm: 'Give

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-5.

the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son.'

Then follows the picture of a reign of righteousness and peace, founded upon David's prediction, and partly drawn from the actual circumstances of Solomon's early reign; but these historic features glow with an ideal splendour, which shows that, though borrowed from present realities, they are used as types of a future and more glorious kingdom.

If 'the kings of Tharsis and of the Isles give presents, and the kings of Arabia and Saba offer gifts,' these are but first-fruits of the promise, pledges of the eternal dominion and universal homage awaiting One greater than Solomon, before whom 'all kings shall fall down, all nations call Him blessed.'

We may grant that to some of that generation Solomon himself seemed for a while to fulfil the promise of the King of Righteousness. It is true that 'he was exalted in wisdom and power above all neighbouring princes, and that his age was the most prosperous, the richest in peace and joy, that Israel had ever known.'¹

¹ Delitzsch, Ps. lxxii.

But the end of his reign was very unlike the beginning. The day that had dawned so bright, set amid dark presages of an approaching storm.

The greatest of princes, the wisest of men, had fallen very far short of the ideal King ; and in each successive occupant of the throne, men looked in vain for the fair image of the Lord's anointed. It might seem to shine out again with reviving splendour in an Asa or Jehoshaphat, in Hezekiah or Josiah, but the hopes thus rekindled died quickly out ; the likeness to the promised Son of David soon passed away ; the contrast only remained, to turn men's longing eyes from the earthly to the heavenly King.

Yet the promise was not forgotten, nor its influence lost, but rather its meaning grew more clear, and the hope that it inspired more pure and spiritual.

Later psalmists, mourning over the decay of the earthly kingdom, may complain, as in our text, that God seems to have forsaken His anointed, broken the covenant of His servant, and cast his crown to the ground ; but they

still appeal to God's 'old loving-kindnesses, which He swore unto David in His truth'; they still make known His faithfulness from one generation to another.¹

In like manner, Isaiah still looks for a rod of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots; but the vision is no longer that of an earthly ruler. The true Son of David is now clearly seen to be greater than Solomon in all his wisdom and in all his glory.

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him in such manifold and transcendent power of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, that He shall not judge, as man judges, after the sight of His eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.²

The peace and prosperity of His kingdom are painted in brighter colours than all that man has ever dreamed of a golden age, or of the paradise of God.

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 1, 49.

² Isa. xi. 1-4.

The whole creation shall share in the happiness of Messiah's reign. None shall hurt or destroy in all His holy mountain, 'for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'¹

Such is the sublime consummation of prophecy in one of its chief aspects. The reign of the promised Son of David is transfigured into the glory of the kingdom of God and of Christ.

But meanwhile revelation has been growing in another direction; and beside the majestic figure of God's anointed King, we begin gradually to discern another and a very different form, the righteous Sufferer, the faithful but afflicted 'Servant of God.'

And here we shall find as before, that the natural and supernatural elements of prophecy are harmoniously combined, the Divine Spirit borrowing from human experience the material on which to work in depicting the mysterious form of the 'Man of sorrows.' For the trials and sufferings, the scorn and persecution that await the righteous, are a theme not limited to inspired writers.

¹ Isa. xi. 9.

A well-known passage in Plato's *Republic* shows how far natural sagacity, refined in the experience of the wisest and most just of men, could penetrate the mystery of suffering endured for truth and righteousness' sake, and foresee the issues of the conflict between perfect holiness and the evil world to which its very presence is a rebuke.

The argument on one side ran thus: Let justice stand before the eyes of men, perfect in itself, but stript of every adventitious aid,—wealth, power, friendship, fair repute, all sacrificed in the noble resolve not to seem righteous, but to be,—and what will be the righteous man's reward?

He shall be scourged, stretched upon the rack, and set in the stocks; his eyes shall be burnt out; and after every extremity of suffering, he shall at last be crucified.¹

It is little wonder that a Christian Father calls such a passage 'all but a prophecy of the economy of our salvation.'²

But Socrates in his answer shows a still

¹ *Rep.* lib. ii. § 4, 5.

² Clemens Alex. *Strom.* V. xiv. § 109.

deeper knowledge of the truth : he maintains that the just man, however misjudged or hated by the world, must be known and beloved by God. He must therefore be rewarded in the end. 'Poverty, disease, and all other seeming evils must work together for good to him in life or in death ; Divine justice can neither overlook nor forsake one who sets himself in earnest to practise virtue, and to grow in righteousness as much as it is possible for man to become like unto God.'¹

So striking a testimony of purely pagan, that is to say, of purely human faith in the righteousness of God, and the final triumph of good over evil, serves well to illustrate what we may call the natural side of prophecy.

For whatever the keenest sagacity, the ripest experience, and the finest moral sense could achieve in the soul of the great Athenian, may with safety be ascribed to like causes in the prophet of Israel.

His soul looked forth from the first into a clearer light, and breathed a purer air. It was nurtured upon the truths of a nobler creed, and

¹ *Rep.* lib. x. § 11.

inspired by the memories of a more marvellous, more authentic history.

The Israelite looked back upon a long line of ancestors, chosen and beloved of God, upon a covenant of infinite blessings already in part fulfilled, upon a national deliverance evidently miraculous, and upon a law divinely given, whose threatenings and promises had both been often tested, and both alike proved true. God had dealt with him as He had not dealt with men of other nations. It would be strange if he had not learned as much or more than heathen sages of the faithfulness of God, of the uses of adversity, of the sure recompense of the just.

Thoughts such as these had already found expression in David's earliest psalms; but he had more to learn from his own heart's experience, before he could look upon that fuller vision of the righteous Sufferer, which he afterwards so vividly portrayed.

A strong sense of personal merit, showing itself in frequent assertions of perfect uprightness before God and man, is a marked feature of the earlier psalms, which disappears entirely

in the later, for David has learnt meanwhile a hard and bitter lesson in self-knowledge. The power of temptation, the deceitfulness of his own heart, the misery of unforgiven sin, the agony of remorse, he had felt as few feel, and told as none other has ever told them.

In the depth and earnestness of his repentance, David's true greatness is strikingly displayed. He is never more kingly, never more 'the man after God's own heart,' than when he humbles himself in the dust, and cries, 'I acknowledge my fault, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.'¹

The eyes of his understanding were now opened to see all the horror of sin in contrast with the holiness of God, and thence to learn the greatness of Divine compassion, the necessity of repentance, and the blessedness of a free pardon and full restoration to God's favour.

In these great evangelic truths, so hardly

¹ Ps. li. 4.

won and so touchingly expressed, we see an essential part of David's training as a prophet, and a great advance in the knowledge of true religion.

It was like a new revelation when the king of Israel was heard to confess, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.' It was the foreshadowing of a new and better covenant when he cried, 'Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee; Thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.'

If David in his sin had ceased to be a type of the sinless Saviour, he became in his repentance the prophet of a new dispensation of the Spirit, and the evangelist of grace.

No wonder, therefore, that we find in his later psalms a deeper insight into the nature of sin and suffering.

Henceforth we hear no more appeals to God to bear witness of his innocence; all confidence in his own righteousness is gone. Though smarting as keenly as ever under the

injustice of enemies and the treachery of friends, he sees that their malice is a scourge in the hand of God, and acknowledges in his sufferings the merciful chastisement and correction of his sin.

There is a change also in his feeling towards those whose injustice is the immediate cause of his suffering; there is less of personal hatred, and more of righteous zeal for God; less of passionate resentment, and more of longing for peace. Such are the feelings expressed in the 55th Psalm: 'The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh in so fast: for they are minded to do me some mischief, so maliciously are they set against me. My heart is disquieted within me; and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and a horrible dread hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest.'¹

Observe, also, what a sorrowful and tender remembrance of lost friendship mingled with his bitterest anger against the traitor: 'It is

¹ Vv. 3-6.

not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour; for then I could have borne it. . . . But it was thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends.' ¹ And then all in a moment the natural feelings of the man, so sensitive to wrong, so quick in resentment, flash out in vehement imprecation of Divine vengeance upon the malice and hypocrisy of the traitors: 'Let death come hastily upon them, and let them go down quick into hell; for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.' ²

But the transient outburst quickly gives place to a calmer mood; and in sweet and solemn tones the psalmist expresses his submission to God's will, and sure confidence in His merciful protection: 'As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. In the evening, and morning, and at noonday will I pray, and that instantly; and He shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me.'

¹ Vv. 12-15.

² Ver. 16.

‘O cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee; and shall not suffer the righteous to fall for ever.’¹

The psalm is not one of those which are regarded as directly prophetic of Christ. It is clear that David is speaking from the depth of his own heart, and describing his own sorrows. There is no case of conscious prediction beyond his anticipation of the righteous vengeance which should so quickly bring down his enemies into the pit of destruction.

Yet it is evident that in David’s sufferings, especially in his betrayal by some familiar friend, there is a typical force which makes his thoughts and words so significant when applied to Christ, that they may well be called an unconscious prophecy. At all events, we here see in David a preparation of the heart and mind, such as befitted a prophet who should be moved by the Holy Ghost to speak of ‘the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.’

We may well believe that a soul so richly endowed by nature, so trained by God’s pro-

¹ Vv. 17-19, 23.

vidence, so purified and strengthened by His grace, and so ready to be stirred by the breath of His Spirit, was in fact lifted up at times into a higher sphere of thought and feeling, and moved to speak of things which had not otherwise entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Such seem to be the sources, human and Divine, of the inspiration that breathes in prophecies like that of the 22d Psalm. The cry of the soul forsaken in its anguish,¹ the renewed trust in God's sure deliverance,² the vows of thanksgiving,³ and the anticipation of that universal kingdom wherein 'all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him,'⁴ may have been suggested by some critical passage in David's life, if, as seems most probable, the psalm was his. But there are traits in the sufferings there depicted which cannot be applied either to David or to any other person known in the Old Testament history: 'All

¹ Ver. 1 ff.

² Vv. 19-21.

³ Vv. 22, 25.

⁴ Vv. 27, 28.

they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, if He will have him.' 'They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they stand staring and looking upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.'¹

Jewish rabbis and Christian interpreters agree in recognising here the voice of the suffering Messiah.

No critical research has ever been able to point to any historical personage, save One, in whom the various features are combined.

In that One, if there be any truth in Apostles and Evangelists, the prophecy was fulfilled to its minutest details, and the anguish of His soul was breathed forth in its very words, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

The whole tone of the psalm is worthy of the spirit of that meek and holy Sufferer. There is in it no trace of personal sinfulness,

¹ Vv. 7, 8, 17, 18.

not a thought or desire of vengeance upon the ruthless persecutors.

I cannot but believe that the Spirit of God, who is at the same time the Spirit of His incarnate Son, here speaks through the psalmist things passing man's experience. For it is thus that the sufferings of Christ must be foretold, if they were to be foretold at all.

In the conception of that awful mystery of the Cross and Passion, we must expect the Spirit of prophecy to soar far above the prophet's ken. It is here that man's experience of mortal agony is most needed, and yet of itself most inadequate to tell of the travail of Christ's soul.

If there was never any sorrow like unto His sorrow, then in the picture that foreshadows it we must look for something more than the psalmist himself had ever felt and suffered; something more than the natural utterances of a soul that has passed through the deep, and been laid in the lowest pit of misery, and thence restored to life and joy,—we must look for that which, as I think, we

find in this psalm, the revelation by God's Spirit to such a soul of One in whom a deeper, holier mystery of suffering should be at last unfolded into a greater salvation and a brighter glory.

In such a case I cannot hesitate to claim for prophecy a Divine power not necessarily dependent on the will of the human interpreter, not always limiting its action to the range of his conscious perceptions: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth.'

The Spirit of God is free, and we do not detract from His freedom or power, we do but magnify His wisdom and goodness, when we try reverently to trace the self-imposed conditions under which He works by human agents, and condescends to observe the laws by which He has Himself defined the limits of created intelligence.

It is well to acknowledge the abundance of His revelations; it is still better to mark the order, the increase, and the just proportion by which that abundance is regulated, accord-

ing to the wants of successive ages and the capacities of individual prophets.

Thus, even in the psalms of which we have been speaking, the revelation of the sufferings of Messiah is not yet complete.

I see, indeed, the Holy One and the Just hated and despised by man, forsaken, as it seems, by God. I hear His agonizing cry, and the mocking laughter of the crowd. I see them piercing His hands and His feet, parting His garments, and casting lots upon His vesture; putting vinegar and gall to his burning lips.

I see the whole picture of the Cross vivid, intense, and lifelike in its minutest detail, but all resting on dark clouds of unsolved mystery.

I long to know the meaning of those innocent sufferings; I ask in wonder why that death of shame is followed by songs of thanksgiving, and by a glorious vision of the kingdom of God;¹ but from the psalmist I receive no answer.

Three centuries yet must roll away ere a

¹ Ps. xxii. 22-31.

Prophet shall arise to unveil the great mystery of redeeming love, and to tell how that Man of sorrows was wounded for our transgressions, and the chastisement of our peace laid upon Him.

LECTURE XII.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 12TH APRIL 1874.

The Revelation of Christ's vicarious Sufferings
appropriate to the Character and Times of
Isaiah.

XII.

The Revelation of Christ's vicarious Sufferings appropriate to the Character and Times of Isaiah.

‘Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed.’—ISA. liii. 4, 5.

WE have seen on a former occasion that the life-like pictures of a Righteous Sufferer presented in the Psalms suggest a question which they do not answer.

To what end were such sufferings permitted and endured ?

The answer—first given in our text—is the crowning utterance of prophecy.

As Isaiah is by universal consent the greatest of prophets, so the excellence and grandeur of Isaiah himself culminate in that description of

the martyred Servant of the Lord, which forms the central and dominant subject of the last twenty-seven chapters.

There are critics who would separate that portion of the book from the writings of Isaiah, and ascribe it to some unknown prophet living in the midst of the captivity in Babylon.

In trying, therefore, to illustrate the nature of prophecy by comparing this great oracle with other chief prophecies of Isaiah, and with his personal history and character, I may hope at the same time to show that the undoubted author of the first thirty-nine chapters was specially fitted and prepared to receive the new revelation contained in the latter portion of the book.

The personal preparation of the prophet consists partly in the inward work which is known only to Him who creates and endows man's spirit as He will, partly in the outward circumstances and providential discipline of the prophet's life, and partly in a special commission from God.

That vision of the Lord in His temple, which Isaiah records in chap. vi., was probably his

original consecration to the prophetic office ; it was certainly a distinct and special call to the work of his whole after life.

Such a crisis is the meeting-point of all the natural and divine influences which make up the inspiration of the prophet : it is both the goal to which all his earlier training under God's providence leads on, and the source from which henceforward his soul is enriched with new streams of light and life.

Let us then first observe how in Isaiah's call the natural results of his experience are combined with a direct and supernatural illumination : ' I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.'

The physical condition of the prophet in this vision, or trance, or ecstasy (whichever we may call it), lies equally beyond our experience and our understanding.

But we can see that the truths presented to his mind are clothed in familiar forms.

The scene is in heaven ; but the temple, the throne, the flaming altar, the house filled with the smoke of incense, are all images borrowed from the earthly sanctuary.

The prophet, though raised above his ordinary state of consciousness, is not carried away into regions wholly new or strange; but well-known forms of things on earth swell out into grander proportions, and waking thoughts grow brighter in a vision of unearthly glory.

Thus all that Isaiah had before conceived of the Divine nature is gathered and combined and concentrated under the quickening impulse of the Spirit into a deeper, truer, and more vivid sight of the essential glory of the Godhead, as he stands before the throne and hears the seraphs crying one to another, in words that still sound on from age to age, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.'

But the perfect holiness before which even seraphim veil their faces with their wings, is a consuming fire to sinful man; and all that Isaiah had ever felt of sin's defiling power in himself, all that he had ever seen of its debasing effects in his countrymen, now rushes back upon his memory with an overwhelming sense of guilt and shame. Trembling under the piercing light of God's presence, awe-stricken and dumb amid the pure and holy praises of

the seraphim, he bursts at last into a cry of agony and terror, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'¹

But Isaiah knew also that the God whom he feared is a God gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the cry of self-condemnation is therefore quickly followed by the assurance of forgiveness; and as the live coal from the altar touches his mouth, he knows that the purifying fire of Divine love has purged the conscience from sin, and hallowed the lips for God's service.

The prophet thus fitted for his work receives at once his mission; he hears the voice of the Lord, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'²

Many a time must Isaiah have longed to go forth and speak to his fellow-countrymen in God's name, as he watched with keen insight and deep sympathy the errors and dangers both of prince and people.

¹ Ver. 5.

² Ver. 8.

Himself of royal descent, brought up in Jerusalem among the sons of the prophets, studying with them the marvellous history of the nation and the ancient oracles of God, listening to the living voice of the most enlightened spiritual teachers of the age, admitted to share their thoughts and feelings, their hopes and fears, he wanted nothing but the direct commission and authority of God to go forth in His name.

And now the assurance of God's favour and grace having filled him with fresh strength and courage, he answers at once to the call of that mysterious voice from out the throne, 'Here am I ; send me.'

It is a striking example of the moral nature of inspiration, the power of the Spirit not crushing the genius of the man, but accepting his ready will, purged, strengthened, and perfected in full agreement with the individual character which God had formed in him from the first.

The task to which the prophet is now called is a hard and seemingly a hopeless one ; but here too we shall find the same gracious har-

mony and proportion between the revelation granted and the mental state of the person receiving it.

For it was in the first moments of his new-born zeal that Isaiah could best bear to look upon the trials and sorrows that awaited him. 'Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.'¹

What a foresight is here of labour and sorrow for the prophet himself! He is sent to rebuke his people with the certainty of incurring their hatred; to warn, with the conviction that his warning will not avail; to entreat, while he knows that entreaty will be met with scorn and contempt. He will see his own predictions fulfilled from day to day in the unbelief and impenitence of his hearers; twice bearing the burden of his people's sins, twice living his own life of sorrow,—in the

¹ Vv. 9, 10.

clearness of prophetic foresight, and in the reality of present suffering. It is a meet preparation for one who was hereafter to depict 'the Servant of the Lord,' whom man despiseth, whom the nation abhorreth, and who cries, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought: but surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.'¹

But the vision reaches far beyond the immediate results of Isaiah's ministry, and covers the whole range of his subsequent predictions. Moved with a great sorrow at the rejection of his people, and yet trusting to God's oft-repeated promises that He could not cast them off for ever, he asks, in trembling hope, 'Lord, how long?' How long shall they harden themselves in their iniquity, and refuse to listen to Thy warnings?

The answer of God comprises in a few pregnant sentences the future history of Judah; her cities wasted, her land utterly desolate and forsaken, her people removed far away,—and yet the holy seed still indestructible, and

¹ Isa. xlix. 4.

a remnant spared to return, like the life that remains in the stock of a tree when an oak or a terebinth is cut down.¹

The course of events was foretold with perfect truth, but only in the broadest outline; and such a revelation was neither premature nor unnatural. It only confirmed the certainty of fears and forebodings over which Isaiah must have been long brooding as he marked the growing corruption of the age, and the signs of approaching ruin, and then called to mind the threats and promises, the curses and blessings of the Law, or pondered over the recent warnings of contemporary prophets—of Hosea, or Amos, or Joel.

In all these immediate predecessors of Isaiah we find the like rebukes of national corruption, and the like predictions of invasion and captivity, followed by the like promises of unfailing mercy and final deliverance.²

And when in the prophecies ascribed to Isaiah's latest years we see successive pictures of Judah's captivity and restoration growing

¹ Vv. 11-13.

² See Hosea i. 11, vi. 4, 11; Amos ii. 4, ix. 11; Joel ii. 28-32, iii. 20.

more and more distinct, so that the prophet almost seems to live among the scenes that he describes, we find in this no argument against the unity of authorship, but rather the reverse; for if the outlines of those finished pictures are firmly sketched in this earliest vision; if those full, and rich, and varied strains have had already their simple prelude here,—then I see in the clearer details of those later predictions only an instance of the natural and orderly growth of revelation through a richer outpouring of Divine illumination upon the larger experience and riper wisdom of the prophet.

Let us then try to trace both the abiding influence of this vision and the growth of new light in some of Isaiah's chief prophecies, beginning with that of the Virgin's child.¹

Here at once we find the prophet bringing forth together things new and old.

In the invasion of Judah, which gave occasion for the prophecy,—in the stubborn unbelief of Ahaz and his people,—in the desolation

¹ Isa. vii.—xii.

of the land by the armies of Egypt and Assyria,—in the subsequent deliverance, and in the remnant that shall return,—we see how Isaiah is taught to apply the great general truths of his earliest vision to the special events of his time, and to develope its brief forewarnings into full and precise prophecies of the coming destiny of the nation.

If, on the other hand, we find much that is new and in part mysterious and amazing, what else can we expect when the prophet has offered in vain any sign that the king can ask either in the depth or in the height above, and then declares that the Lord Himself shall give a sign?

For it is not now to the apostate king, but to the faithful of his own day and of ages to come, that Isaiah foretells the birth of one whose name shall be called Immanuel, God with us. And when we observe how in that prophecy all previous hopes of redemption are confirmed; how the promise of the seed of the woman is renewed in the Virgin that shall conceive and bear a son; how the blessing of Abraham shall reach to all the nations of the earth when 'the root of Jesse shall stand for

an ensign of the people, and unto it shall the Gentiles seek;'¹ and how the sure mercies of David are enlarged beyond measure, and glorified in that Son, whose name shall be called 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it for ever:' I say, when we remember how this great prophecy of Immanuel thus enriches every promise that was most certain, and brightens every hope that was most dear to all faithful Israelites, we see that no other sign in earth or heaven could have given such comfort and confidence as this, both against the present danger impending over the house of David, and against all fear of the entire destruction of the nation in its approaching chastisements.

And if all was not clear at once to the prophet; if, in his intense desire and longing to behold the promised Redeemer, he may at first have expected His speedy coming—the error

¹ Isa. xi. 10.

involved in so pious and natural a thought was quickly removed when he was taught again by God to look for the immediate sign—the type, as it were, of the greater fulfilment in his own son to be born to him of the prophetess, a virgin already espoused to him as his second wife.¹

The name of his elder son, Shear-jashub, had previously embodied the promise that a remnant should return; another son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, now prefigures the speedy overthrow of the enemies of Judah; and the prophet, thus taught to look beyond his own time for the birth of the great Immanuel, and for that salvation of God which his own name Isaiah presignified, declares that he will ‘wait upon the Lord, and look for Him;’ and, meanwhile, joyfully recognises, in his own family, the types and emblems of the promised redemption: ‘Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts.’²

I pass to Isaiah’s later prophecies, promising only that in them we may expect

¹ Isa. viii. 1-4.

² Isa. viii. 17, 18.

to mark the effects of a long and mournful experience. For the corruption of Judah has meanwhile become more evidently hopeless, and her doom more certain; not only can the prophet foresee the uplifted scourge and the coming stroke, — he has already seen that scourge descend in many a sharp but unavailing chastisement. Hiding his face and refusing all comfort, he has cried aloud: ‘Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.’¹

His sorrow has been embittered by the daily sight of reckless profligacy, and hard and cynical unbelief. He has seen, when God called to mourning and fasting and sackcloth, that there was only joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine, — ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’ And it was revealed in the prophet’s ear, ‘Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord.’²

Out of such mournful experience of the

¹ Isa. xxii. 9.

² Vv. 12–14.

nation's apostasy, and the inefficacy of his own ministry to save them, there grew up gradually in the prophet's mind that distinct and personal image of the Servant of the Lord which is so conspicuous in his later prophecies.

From the first giving of the Law, the whole people had been called to Jehovah's service; they were to be unto Him a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

And still God says by Isaiah's mouth, 'Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. . . . Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.'¹

But how can the promise ever be fulfilled in such a nation as this? Israel ought indeed to have been a teacher of righteousness to the world, a guide of the blind, a light to them that were in darkness. But now God complains, 'Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger that I have sent.'²

By whom then shall the blind eyes be opened, and the deaf ear unstopped? Who shall be found able not only to show forth

¹ Isa. xli. 8, 9.

² Isa. xlii. 19.

in Himself the perfect image of God's servant, but also to impress His own character upon a remnant of the people and fill them with His spirit?

Such an one God sets thus before the prophet's eye: 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.'¹

It is no rhetorical figure, no ideal personification of the whole people, that is here presented. For nothing can be less like a mere artifice of speech than that exquisite picture of tenderness and strength, of gentle patience and dauntless courage united in Him who 'shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; who shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; and yet shall bring forth judgment truthfully, and never fail nor be discouraged till He has established true religion in the earth.'²

In the 49th chapter we hear the mysterious

¹ Isa. xlii. 1.

² Isa. xlii. 2-4.

voice of this same servant of the Lord calling upon the isles and nations from afar to hear him. 'The Lord,' he says, 'hath called me from the womb; from the time that my mother conceived me hath He made mention of my name: He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; as a polished shaft hath He hidden me in His quiver.'¹

It is not Israel as a nation that so speaks, for the same voice continues, 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.'² It is not the elect remnant, for that remnant is itself to be restored by the ministry of this servant of the Lord.³ It is some one Person who alone is worthy of the glorious name of Israel, by whom Israel's work in the world shall be accomplished, and to whom therefore God says, 'Thou art my servant, thou art Israel in whom I will be glorified.'⁴

This Person is not Isaiah himself. He is indeed One in whom Isaiah may see all his own sorrowful experience as a prophet repeated and surpassed.

¹ Isa. xlix. 1, 2.

² Ver. 5.

³ Ver. 6.

⁴ Ver. 3.

He too shall say, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.'

But what is said of this Servant of the Lord is so excellent and so glorious, that it reaches far beyond the commission and the power of the greatest of human prophets.

To no mere man could God say, 'It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.'¹

The restorer of Israel, the light of the Gentiles, the salvation of the world, must be One who surpasses all human prophets as much in His glory as in His humiliation.

But the question still remains, What was the connection between that unparalleled humiliation and this surpassing glory of the Servant of the Lord?

Why did He give His back to the smiters, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair? Why should He not hide His face from shame and spitting?²

¹ See Delitzsch and Rosenmüller.

² Isa. l. 6.

And how is it that in the midst of such sufferings He is so confident of victory, setting His face like a flint because He knows that He shall not be forsaken nor ashamed?¹

The reason is given in a very remarkable manner, being first put into the mouth of those who seem, as it were, to have stood by the very cross of Jesus: 'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.'² Thus do the witnesses of those mysterious sufferings confess that they have been looking upon them to the last under a total misapprehension of their meaning; and the prophecy implies in its very form—what was so remarkably fulfilled—that its meaning should not be understood until all was accomplished.

But we have not so much to do with the fulfilment as with the circumstances under which the prophecy itself was uttered.

It was in one point an entirely new revelation. The atoning virtue of those sinless sufferings, the acceptance of that holy obedi-

¹ Ver. 7.

² Isa. liii. 4.

ence unto death as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, is a truth first unfolded in this passage of Isaiah.

However it may have been foreshadowed to Abraham in the offering of his son, or felt by Moses in his willingness to give his own soul for the people, or implied in those psalms which exhibit such marvellous contrasts of suffering and glory; yet to Isaiah was reserved the privilege of first announcing in express words this central truth of the world's salvation.

The person and the time were both singularly appropriate. The rare gifts and genius of Isaiah, the marvellous beauty and vigour of his style, his intimate knowledge of the deep corruption of the age, his experience of the unavailing efforts of so good and great a king as Hezekiah, his own long exercise of the prophetic office, the abundance of his earlier visions and revelations, and the amazing depth of his insight into the mysteries of the Divine nature, and the plan of man's salvation,—all point to him as the one prophet most worthy to foresee the sufferings of the incarnate Son,

and to show in His sacred death the accepted sacrifice for sin, and the free gift of everlasting life.

The time was most fit, for the prophecy supplied the comfort that was so much needed, not only in prospect of the approaching sorrows of the captivity, but also under the present persecutions of the bloody reign of Manasseh.

Even Ewald, who will not acknowledge any prediction of Christ's sufferings, but only an historical description of the martyrdom of some unknown prophet, and an utterance of the feelings of those who witnessed it, believes that the stedfast death of that one innocent martyr must have imparted to hundreds the power of overcoming all their fears and following his example.¹

But there was one other feature of the times that seemed especially to require such a revelation of the true mode of acceptance with God.

Amid the manifold idolatries and superstitions of the age, men's hearts were failing them for fear, and for want of some strong assurance

¹ *History of Israel*, iv. 211.

of God's mercy. We hear in Micah the cry of their despair: 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'¹

There is no exaggeration in such a question. It was the thought and practice of the age,—the age emphatically of human sacrifice,—the age in which the lascivious rites of Baalim and Ashtaroth were outdone in horror by the fiery furnace of Moloch.

That detestable worship had never before been practised among the Jews; it was introduced by Ahaz, and renewed by Manasseh; of each of them, and of no other king of Judah or Israel, it is recorded that he burnt his children in the fire to Moloch.²

The truth, that sacrifice implies man's willingness to surrender his own life to God, had been perverted into the dreadful thought that God's wrath might be appeased and His

¹ Mic. vi. 7.

² 2 Kings xvi. 3 and xxi. 6. See Ewald, iv. 208, and Payne Smith, *Bampton Lect.* p. 320.

favour purchased by the blood of the young and the innocent.

Truly it was time for God to arise and justify Himself against the wicked imagination of man's heart, by pointing onward to the last and greatest proof of His inexhaustible mercy in sending His own Son to 'bear our griefs and carry our sorrows,' and in infinite love towards mankind, and perfect obedience to His Father's will, to give Himself for us—body, soul, and spirit—a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour unto God.

It was not without anxiety that I set myself to test by this crucial instance the principle which I have been affirming in these lectures; but enough, I trust, has been said to show that here also there is a true harmony between the matter of Divine revelation and the times, circumstances, and personal character of the prophet to whom it is vouchsafed; enough to show that prophecy is a work neither merely human nor exclusively Divine, but one in which we may rightly and reverently trace both the action of God's providence controlling and directing the discipline of life, and the

power of God's Spirit enlisting in His service all the faculties of man's soul, not by unnatural constraint, but by influences congenial to the moral freedom of man's nature.

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